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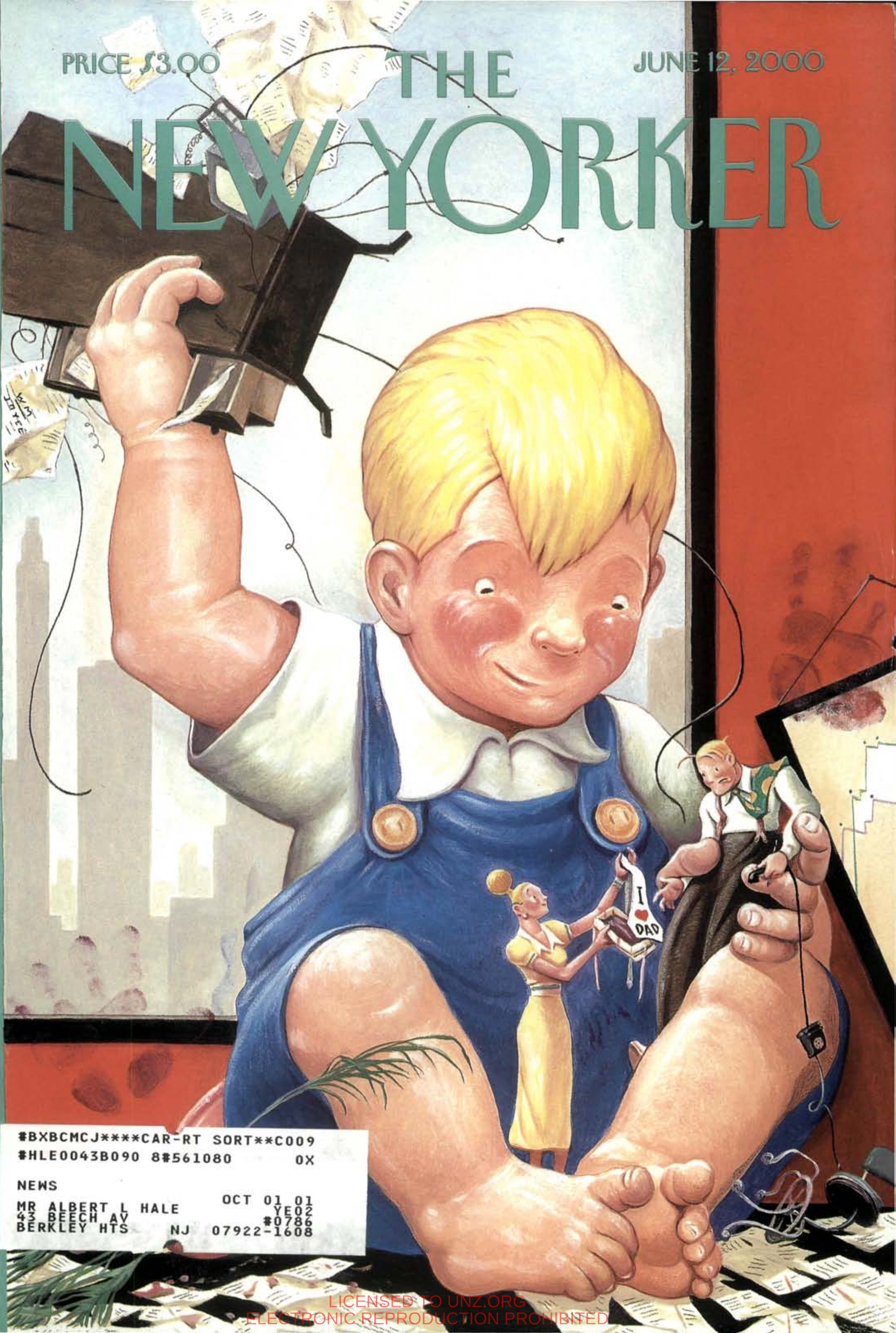
# THE NEW YORKER

JUNE 12, 2000



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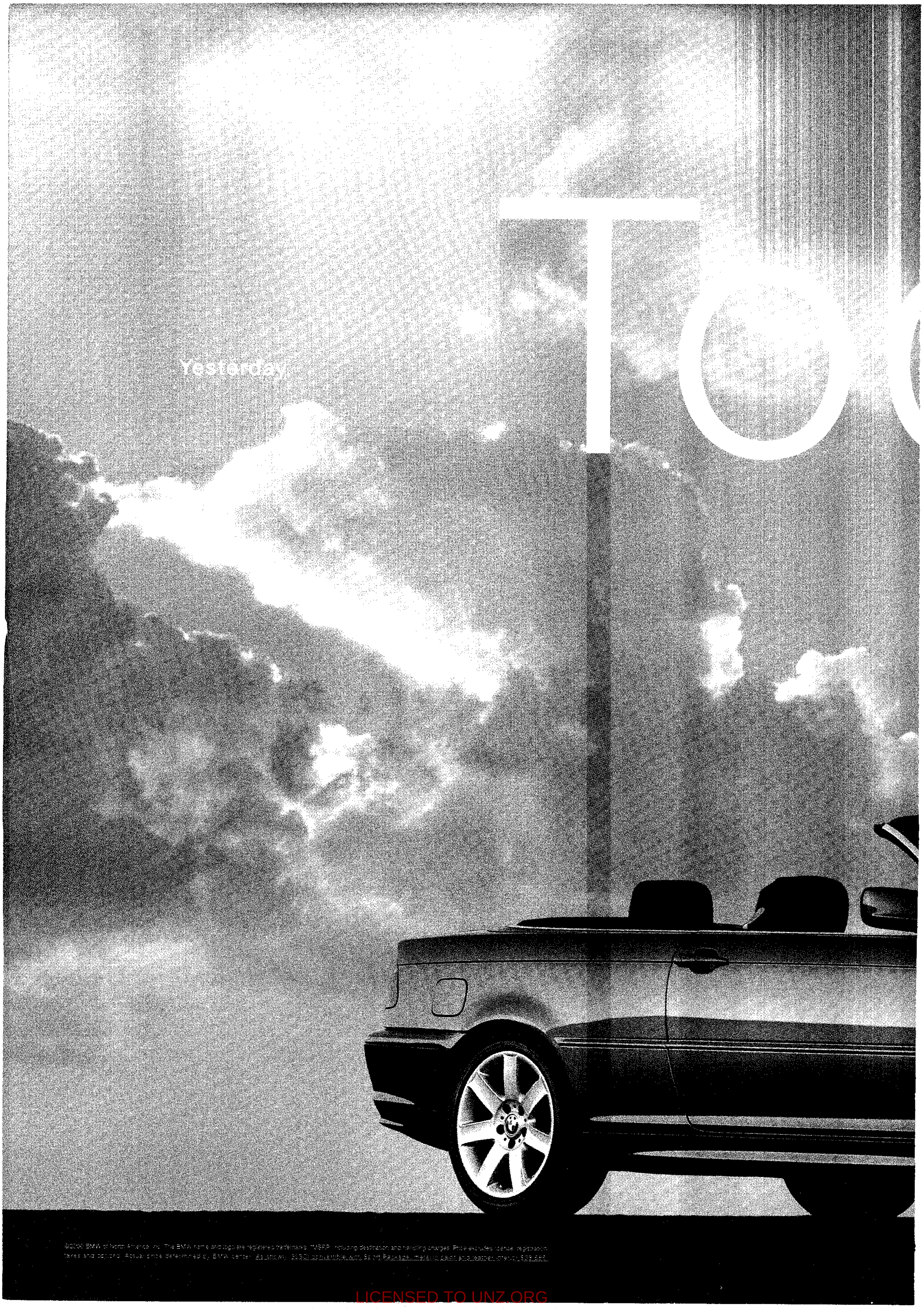

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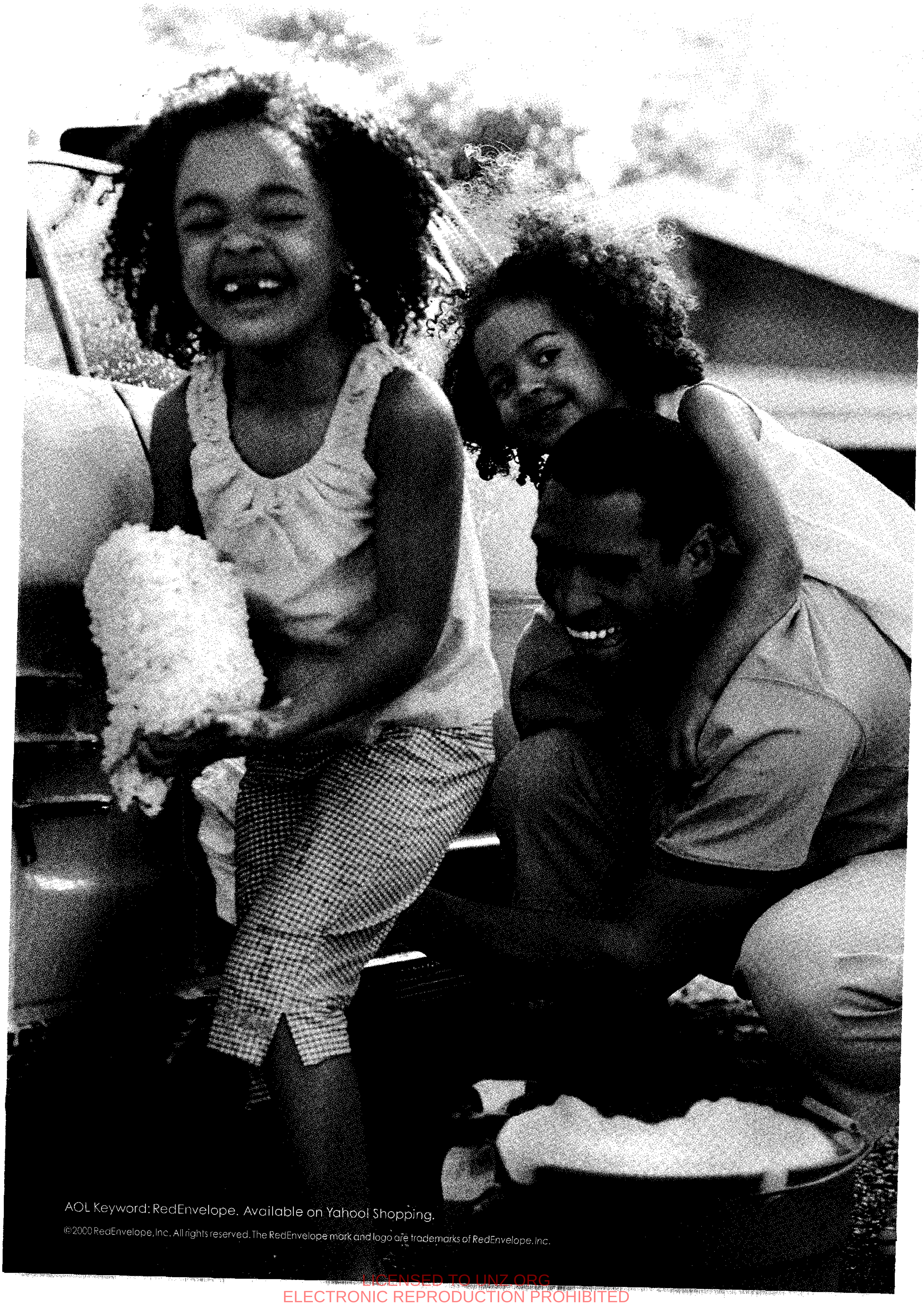

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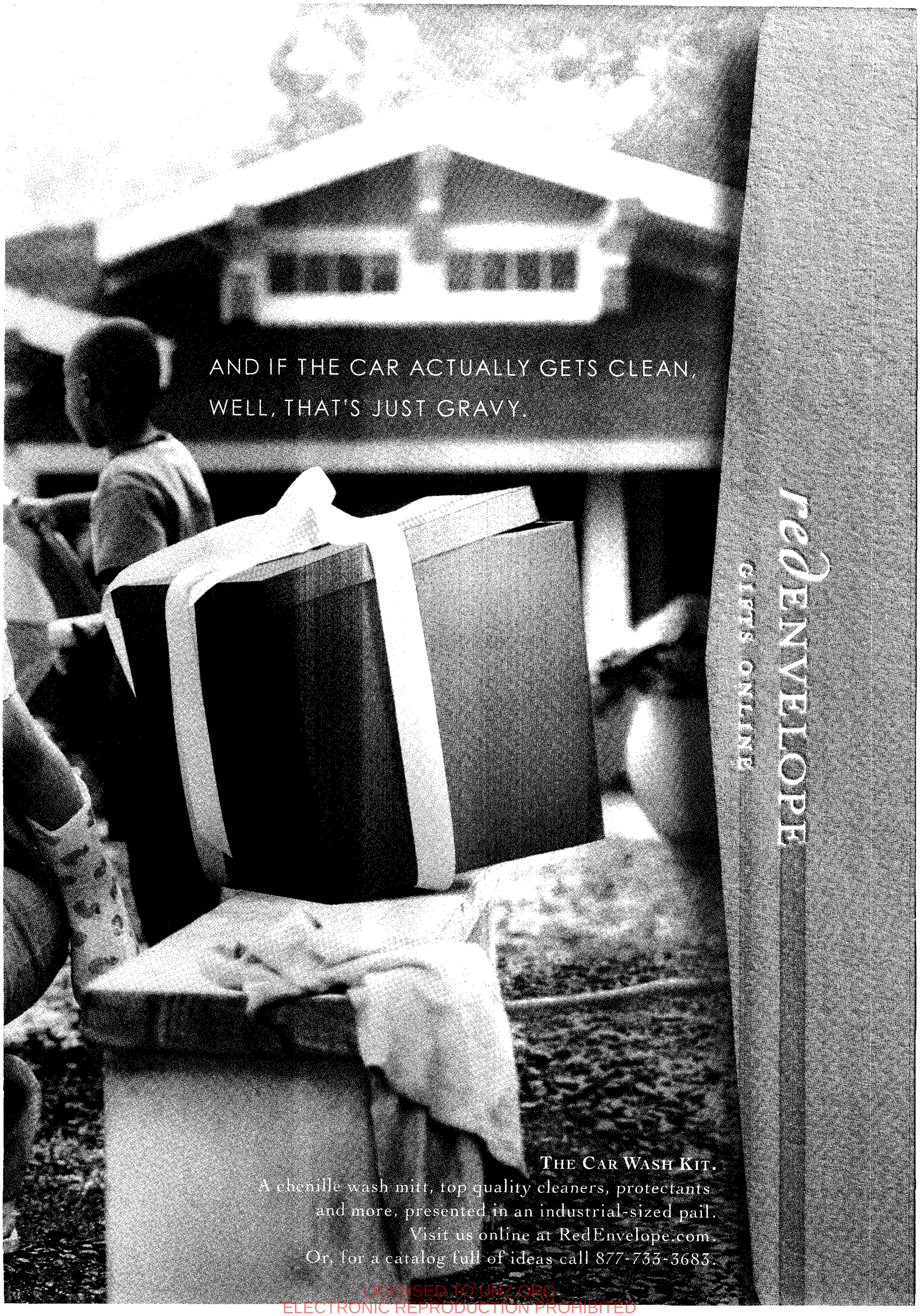

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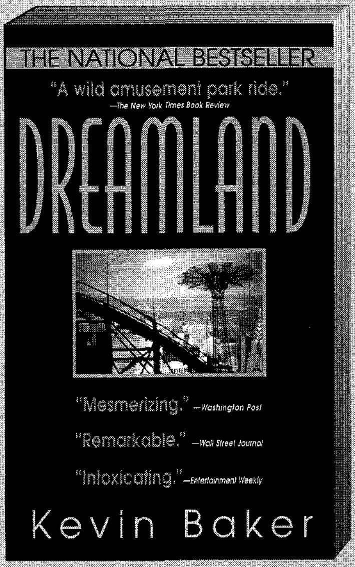
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# CONTRIBUTORS

Richard Preston ("The Genome Warrior," p. 66) won a National Magazine Award for his piece "The Demon in the Freezer," about the smallpox virus, which appeared in our July 12, 1999, issue.

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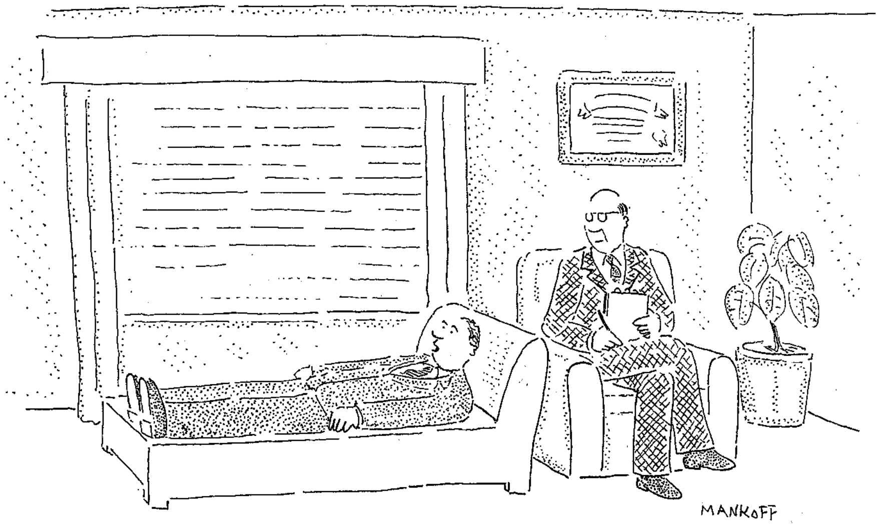
Bruce McCall (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 55; Easel, p. 73), a contributor since 1979, is the author of "Zany Afternoons" and "Thin Ice," a memoir. ♦



*"Look, call it denial if you like, but I think what goes on in my personal life is none of my own damn business."*

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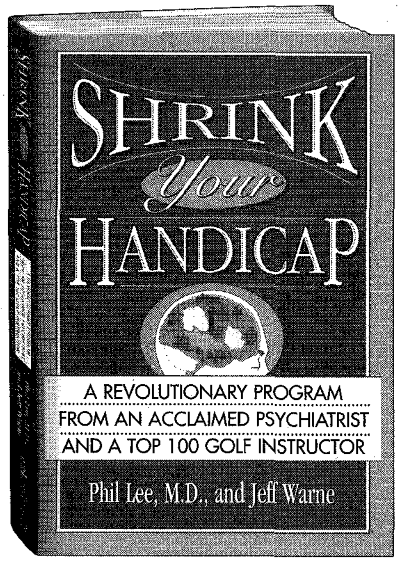
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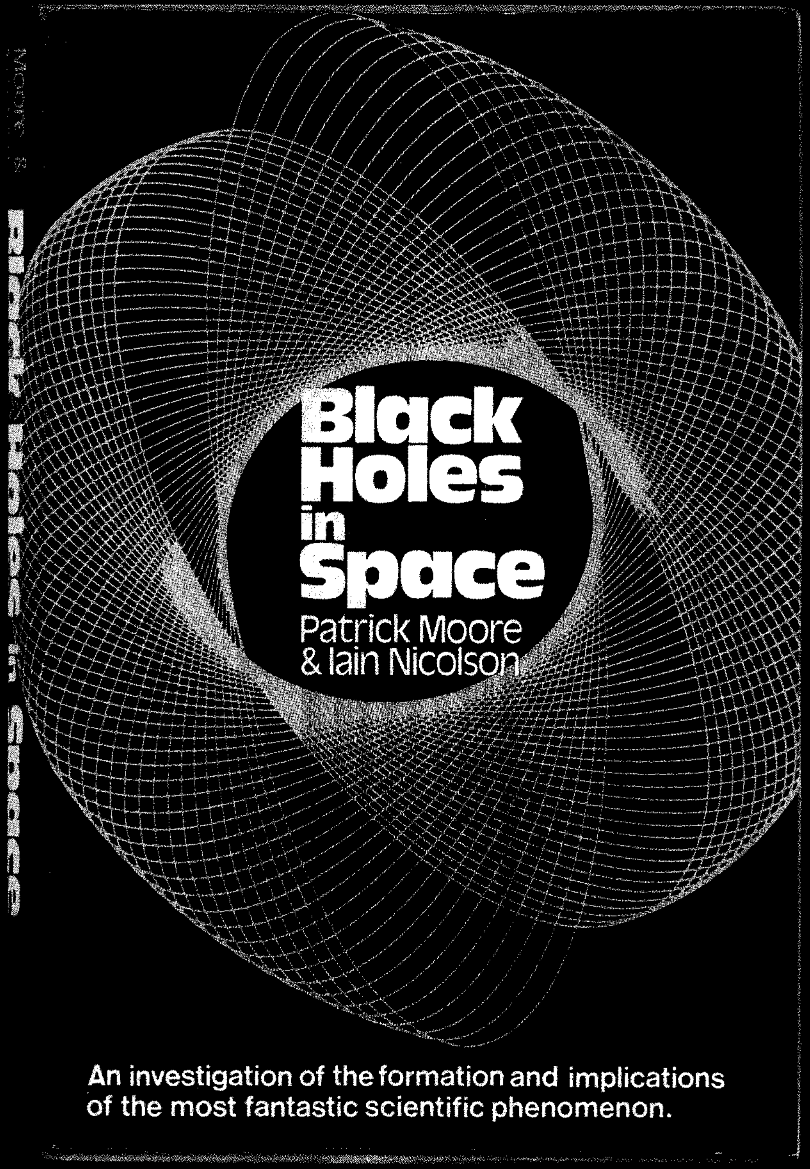

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# THE MAIL

## POLITICS AND WAR

I was working as a banker in Kuwait when Saddam Hussein's forces invaded, and I stayed on, helping the Kuwaiti resistance, until United States forces freed us. As an American, I was pleased to see my country destroy Saddam's military machine and free Kuwait. We knew that the strength of the Iraqi Army lay in its weaponry and not in the skill of its commanders, so we were elated when we heard reports of the destruction of a significant number of Iraqi tanks and armored vehicles by troops under General Barry R. McCaffrey's command. On the other hand, if the allegations in Seymour M. Hersh's "Overwhelming Force" (Annals of War, May 22nd) are proved true, I would not be proud to discover that one of our commanders had opened fire on a force that did not pose a threat, after a ceasefire had been declared.

I understand the frustration the soldiers felt. They had been brought halfway around the world for a mission, and battle was tantalizingly close at hand. The terms of the ceasefire were faulty: no ceasefire should have been called until the Iraqi Army in the south was surrounded, and Iraqi units should have been required to leave their weapons behind. But that does not mitigate the serious nature of what Hersh reveals.

*Michael Kano*
*Vancouver, B. C.*

I disagree with Seymour Hersh's article. In my opinion, the only egregious decision made during the Gulf War was that when we had the Iraqis in retreat we didn't pursue relentlessly. No wonder America hasn't won anything since the Second World War: at the most crucial moment, some politician always steps in to play general. Every last Iraqi weapon and vehicle should have been destroyed and the defeated army returned home in their underwear. Instead, we sent them back to Baghdad intact, so they could immediately begin killing thousands of Kurds, and we're still over there. Nothing was settled.

*Harlan G. Koch*
*San Francisco, Calif.*

It is true, as Major David S. Pierson posits in the June 5th letters column, that war is not like a boxing match, with neutral referees enforcing the rules, but civilized nations have long accepted a code of behavior that places restrictions on all parties to a conflict. Pierson's "anything goes" philosophy of war runs counter to hundreds of years of international law and diplomatic custom. It also violates the humanitarian principles that the United States claims to promote on the international stage. The "overwhelming force" section of the Army Field Manual, which Pierson quotes, refers to the use of force during combat, not to revenge attacks after the fighting has ended. And the purpose of the coalition was not to deal the Iraqis a "knockout punch" but to expel them from Kuwait. Attacking a retreating army after a ceasefire had been declared and victory achieved was not only unnecessary; it was a serious violation of international law and the agreements upon which the coalition was based. The Army would do well to take Pierson's parting words to heart: bullies (defined as those who flaunt their power over individuals weaker than themselves) eventually run into someone bigger or smarter or more determined. I don't believe it's in our long-term interests to create a world based on bullying.

*Bruce Cronin*
*Madison, Wis.*

I experienced the Gulf War as an officer in the 3rd Armored Division, under the command of General Paul Funk. The Gulf War wasn't Iwo Jima, the Bulge, or Khe Sanh. The enemy we met was generally a pitiful sight: troops who had been abandoned as a rear security screen for the Republican Guards, who themselves had already disappeared. We normally blundered into those remnants, guided by flaky intelligence, and mowed them down. Easier than a qualification range! Yet our actual count of enemy-vehicle kills never matched the exorbitant official numbers; I personally saw five destroyed M1A1s—American tanks—none of which had been hit by Iraqis. So what lessons can we learn? The losers in this war were freedom of the press and our right to know what our forces were doing. The winners were the defense industry and the generals who quickly retired to secure positions in business. The hope for the future is junior leaders and troops who are rediscovering the value of honor, dedication, and personal sacrifice over blind careerism.

*R. W. Zimmerman*
*Colorado Springs, Colo.*

Some may consider a piece about certain days of a war, nearly ten years after the fact, to be untimely, but Mr. Hersh's article might have come just in the nick of time. Regardless of whether one believes that General McCaffrey's actions in Iraq after the ceasefire were appropriate in those circumstances, the article amounts to a detailed character study of him. And, as someone who has been to Putumayo, Caquetá, and other areas of Colombia that form the "front" of the war on drugs, I can say that McCaffrey's character is all wrong for his role as the Clinton Administration's drug czar. The American government's intended solutions to Colombia's problems are working about as well as a hammer would on a screw.

*Christopher Ruedy*
*New York City*

CORRECTION: In "Overwhelming Force," we referred to the 2-4 Cavalry Squadron's having taken objects from an Iraqi Defense Ministry compound. The squadron did remove items, including rugs, glassware, and a portrait of Saddam Hussein, but our further report that there was no investigation of their actions was incorrect. In fact, the Army conducted an investigation at the request of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas J. Leney, the squadron commander; it exonerated Leney and his squadron, finding "no intentional violations" of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. We regret the error.

•

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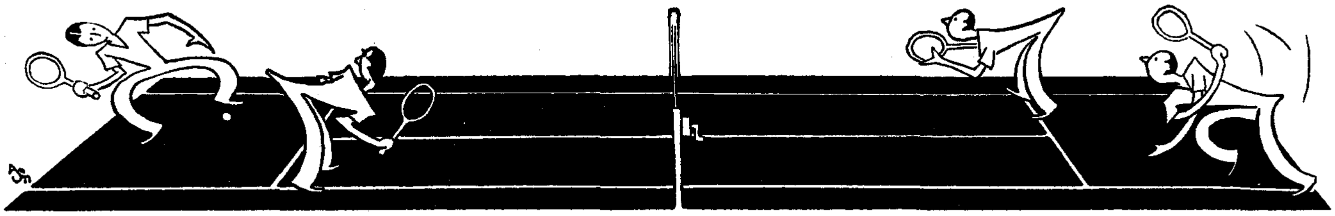

## THE THEATRE
## OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

*Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.*

**AND GOD CREATED GREAT WHALES**
A composer with a degenerative disease struggles to finish an opera based on "Moby Dick," in a musical-theatre work written by Rinde Eckert and staged by the Foundry Theatre. In previews through June 10. Opens June 11 at 4. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

**THE BUBBLY BLACK GIRL SHEDS HER CHAMELEON SKIN**
A musical memoir by Kirsten Childs, which follows its heroine from Los Angeles in the sixties to New York in the nineties. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

**CAPITOL STEPS**
The musical-theatre troupe brings its latest political satire, "It Ain't Over 'til the First Lady Sings," to New York. In previews. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

**CURRENT EVENTS**
A liberal California senatorial candidate returns to his Connecticut home, in a new drama by the actor and playwright David Marshall Grant ("Snakebit"). In previews through June 11. Opens June 13 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

**FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF**
Ntozake Shange's 1974 choreopoem, directed by George Faison. In previews June 8-10. Opens June 11 at 7. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

**NEIL SIMON'S HOTEL SUITE**
Helen Carey, Randy Graff, Leigh Lawson, and Ron Orbach star in an evening of one-acts taken from the playwright's three "Suite" plays. In previews. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

**PENN AND TELLER**
The comedy duo is in town for a brief engagement. June 6-9 at 8, June 10 at 5 and 9, and June 11 at 3 and 7:30. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 307-7171.)

**THE PICTURE**
Tony Torn stars in a new translation of Ionesco's play, staged by the Sanctuary Theatre Workshop. In previews June 7-10. Opens June 11 at 8. (Cha, 135 W. 42nd St. 206-7188.)

**ROMEO AND JULIET**
The Moonwork Theatre Company's version of Shakespeare's play. In previews through June 10. Opens June 11 at 8. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 279-4200.)

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**STRAIGHT-JACKET**
A nineteen-fifties Hollywood actor marries a studio owner's secretary in order to conceal his homosexuality, in a comedy by Richard Day. Preview on June 7. Opens June 8 at 7. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

## OPENED RECENTLY

**AIDA**
Disney's new musical—five years in the making and a product of Pharaonic expense—is, if not perfect, a lively, polished entertainment with bursts of joyful flamboyance worthy of its composer, Elton John. The two female leads—Heather Headley, as Aida, and Sherie René Scott, as Amneris—shine in their different ways, and Bob Crowley's brilliant sets give the show both visual dazzle and emotional resonance. Directed by Robert Falls. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/10/00.) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.)

**AMADEUS**
From London, a revival of Peter Shaffer's drama, starring Michael Sheen as Mozart and David Suchet as Salieri. Sir Peter Hall is the director. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**ANONYMOUS**
Chip Zien has the lead in a comedy by Glen Merzer, about a cloistered novelist whose life is turned upside down when he takes a job in advertising. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200.)

**THE BOMB-ITTY OF ERRORS**
In this exuberant take on "The Comedy of Errors," the basic idea remains the same, but the action has been shifted to the hip-hop realm, and the four extravagantly talented writer-actors (who play all of the parts) make it seem altogether new. (45 Bleecker, 45 Bleecker St., at Lafayette St. 307-4100.)

**CONTACT**
The director and choreographer Susan Stroman's dance play, a triptych of simple stories about the various forms of human connection and the atmosphere of longing, is a big-hearted, witty crowd-pleaser. (10/18 & 10/25/99) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

**COPENHAGEN**
In Michael Frayn's play, which speculates on the controversial 1941 reunion of the two giants of quantum mechanics—the physicists Niels Bohr (Philip Bosco) and Werner Heisenberg (Michael Cumpsty)—the game of not knowing is elevated to an organizing principle. It is so meticulous, so admirable, and so grave that you want to tousle its well-kempt appearance and tell it to lighten up. Nevertheless, the director, Michael Blakemore, manages to make dynamic and suggestive an evening that consists of three actors (Blair Brown plays Margrethe Bohr) and three chairs. (4/24 & 5/1/00) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**THE DESIGNATED MOURNER**
Through a series of intercut monologues, this extraordinary, beautifully written play by Wallace Shawn imagines a time in the future when the contemporary culture will have lost its historical memory and literary heritage and taken up residence in a state of barbarous, mindless sensation. Alternately coruscating and hilarious, the tale is narrated by Shawn with pitch-perfect irony, and Deborah Eisenberg and Larry Pine give strong performances as remnants from the world of privilege and taste which Shawn is at once mocking and mourning. Well directed by André Gregory and memorably staged on the top floors of a derelict men's club deep in the financial district. An important theatrical event. (5/15/00) (21 South William Street. 532-8887.)

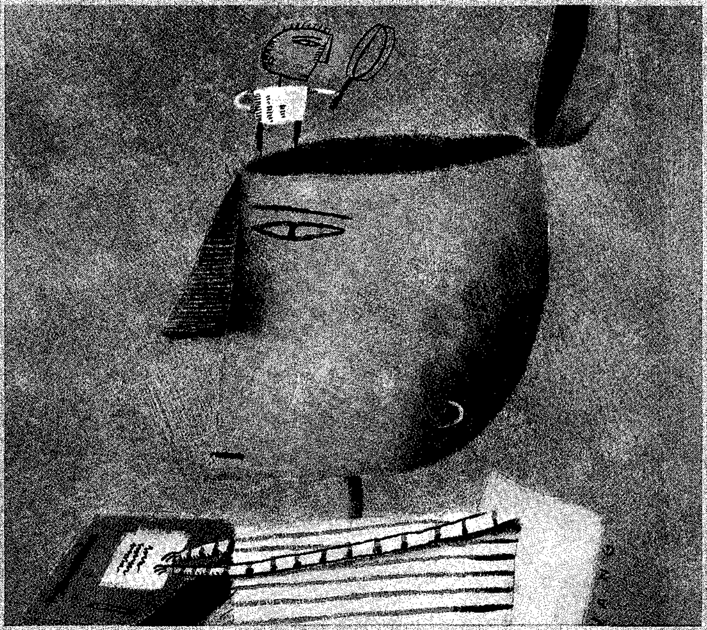
**THE DIRECTOR**
The playwright Nancy Hasty asks whether acting (which is essentially lying) can reveal deeper truth. It's a smart play, and, though it's not entirely satisfying intellectually, John Shea's brilliant performance as the director almost makes it seem so. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 279-4200.)

**DIRTY BLONDE**
Mae West's flirty and dirty persona is the subject of a cunningly written, raffish evening entitled "Dirty Blonde," conceived by the writer-actress Claudia Shear and the director James Lapine. Mae's story is recounted with brio by two fans—Jo (Claudia Shear, who doubles winningly as Mae) and Charlie (the superb Kevin Chamberlin). The success of the play rests not on the louche facts of West's life but on the intersection of her story with the sweetness of the evolving relationship between the two lost souls who narrate it. In the delicate cross-hatching of the public and the private realms, brilliantly engineered by Lapine, "Dirty Blonde" dramatizes how a public persona is both constructed and internalized by its intended audience. (2/7/00) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

**ENSEMBLE STUDIO THEATRE**
This year's six-week marathon of one-acts continues through June 11, with plays by Leslie Caputo, Heather Dundas, Warren Leight, Jeff Reich, and Will Scheffer. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982.)

**JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR**
This misguided Broadway revival of Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1971 musical version of

Brain Teaser



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the Saviour's last days on earth starts out by asking the tantalizing question "What's the buzz?" but never delivers a theatrically satisfying answer. Still, with its archaic whiff of right-wing outrage and singable seventies-rock score, it's fun for nostalgia's sake. (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

**JITNEY**
August Wilson's first play, set in 1977, about the lives of a group of Pittsburgh gypsy-cab drivers. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

**KISS ME, KATE**
With all its admirable expertise and its various delights, this production of the Cole Porter musical is oddly earthbound: it comes down to the vexing issue of chemistry. The leads, Marin Mazzie and Brian Stokes Mitchell, are expert players, but they are not—in the true meaning of the words—star performers. (11/29/99) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**THE LARAMIE PROJECT**
A drama about the murder of gay-hate victim Matthew Shepard, written and directed by Moisés Kaufman. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

**LYDIE BREEZE**
John Guare has rewritten his two 1982 plays, "Lydie Breeze" and "Gardenia," as a drama in two parts, presented in rotating repertory. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

*"The Laramie Project," by Moisés Kaufman, at the Union Square Theatre.*

**A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN**
A solid and satisfying revival of Eugene O'Neill's 1943 drama. Gabriel Byrne's performance, as James Tyrone, an alcoholic actor who returns to his Connecticut farm from New York to unburden himself in the arms of the earth mother Josie (Cherry Jones), is something to see. Daniel Sullivan directed. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

**THE MUSIC MAN**
The first thing that has to be said about this delightful revival of Meredith Willson's 1957 musical, which is under the direction of Susan Stroman, is that it has magnificently solved the Robert Preston Problem in the person of Craig Bierko, who is making his Broadway début in the role of Professor Harold Hill—the role that Preston, of course, immortalized in the original show and in the 1962 movie. Bierko talks and moves and sings with great confidence and charm, and he has the weight and presence on the stage that we associate with male musical stars of several decades ago. Bierko and Rebecca Luker, as Marion, the librarian, make a terrific couple, and Luker's sweet, warbly voice is just right for the era of parlor songs, in which the musical is set. The show hits us with the simplicity and seamlessness of a perfect fairy tale, and it puts music in its proper place—right up there with all the other miracles of life. (5/22/00) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

**PROOF**
The young playwright David Auburn's drama stars Mary-Louise Parker as the daughter of a brilliant University of Chicago mathematician, whose life and career began to disentegrate in his mid-twenties, when he became mentally ill. Parker's character—whom we meet on her twenty-fifth birthday, the day before her father's funeral—appears to have similar gifts and, possibly, similar troubles, and Parker skillfully and believably delivers the smart and sullen, insolent and indolent goods, as she has done many times in the past. Auburn has taken on some biggies here: what the link may be between genius and mental instability, why it is that lives get stuck, and how elusive the truth of the matter—any matter—can be. For all that, you wish the play were a little richer, a little less simply resolved; but its level of accomplishment and the realness of its characters show that Auburn has both depth and a voice. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

**PUSS**
Ludwig Tieck's 1797 stage version of the Puss-in-Boots story gets a modern adaptation, written and directed by Richard Kimmel, which incorporates dance, video, and live music. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 479-8411.)

**THE REAL THING**
Revived here with an excellent cast (especially Stephen Dillane) and subtle direction by David Leveaux, Tom Stoppard's 1984 drama remains the wittiest, sharpest look at that twisted thing called love to come around in decades. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

**THE RIDE DOWN MT. MORGAN**
"Why have I been condemned?" the aptly named bigamist Lyman Felt (Patrick Stewart) asks, rather whinily, toward the end of Arthur Miller's latest play, an examination of the seeming impossibility of fidelity, or, at least, lifelong marriage. And you trust that Lyman is truly in the dark about how he could be convicted of having love for two women. The problem with Miller's project is that his lying Lyman is no longer in love with his first wife at all, and he seems to have only lust for the second. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

**SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER**
John Travolta is not easy to replace, nor are the ashes of disco fever likely to reignite, as this show, based on the 1977 movie, demonstrates. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

**SMALL CRAFT WARNINGS**
In this very late Tennessee Williams drama, the Southern gilding has completely worn off his writing; the result is blunter and less poignant than his classics, and it carries an undertow of exhaustion, but in the end it stays with you. It's 1968 in a low-rent bar in Southern California; the clientele includes a hippie girl, an unlicensed doctor, and a beautician who talks endlessly about her dead gay brother and her independence. There's not much action, but the characters deftly transport Williams's familiar concerns to this unfamiliar setting, where they're unexpectedly resonant. Michael Cannis, as the bartender, and Cristine McMurdo-Wallis, as the beautician, are particularly strong among a fine cast. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 532-8887.)

**SWING!**
No plot, just a hot band, Olympic-class dancers, and major panties—this show, a tribute to swing and its dance counterpart, the Lindy (mother of the jitterbug), lives up to its name. It swings. Directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

**TALLER THAN A DWARF**
From the pen of Elaine May, a new comedy starring Matthew Broderick and Parker Posey and directed by Alan Arkin. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Closes June 11.)

**TRUE WEST**
A sensational revival of Sam Shepard's 1980 play, directed by Matthew Warchus. It's a droll tall tale of sibling rivalry, in which an intrusive, beer-swilling outlaw named Lee and his brother, Austin, a put-upon Ivy League screenwriter, face off in their vacationing mother's tidy modern kitchen. John C. Reilly's roaring, as Lee, and Philip Seymour Hoffman's repressed hostility, as Austin, make for a wonderful contrast and a satisfyingly equal battle of wills, but when the actors switch roles (every few performances), Hoffman's derelict eyes, slurred sea-dog voice, and preternatural comic skills make the contest entertaining but lopsided. (3/27/00) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes June 17.)

**UNCLE VANYA**
The director Michael Mayer's thrilling production of Chekhov's play, featuring Derek Jacobi, Roger Rees, Brian Murray, and Laura Linney. Mike Poulton's superb translation is at once crisp, witty, and actable, and the vastness of the characters' loss and the folly of their capacity for denial come sensationally into focus. (5/8/00) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-1300.)

**WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE**
In his new one-man performance, Eric Bogosian portrays the usual lineup of self-deluded characters and armchair terrorists. His eye is still sharp; what he sees, he sees clearly. But Bogosian doesn't seem to see as much as he used to. Many of his observations on the American way of life seem a little dated, and too much of the coffee he's serving in this show tastes reheated. (5/22/00) (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. Closes June 11.)

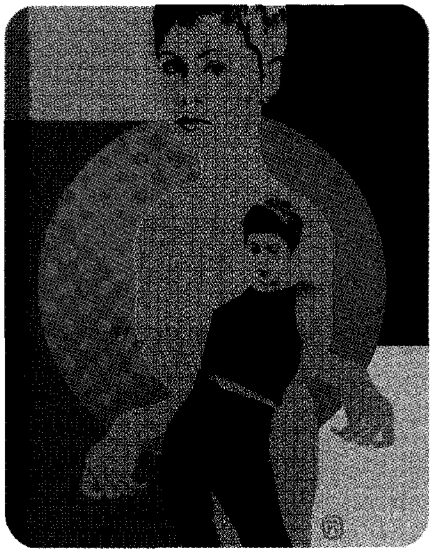
**WHEN THEY SPEAK OF RITA**
Daisy B. Foote's drama, about a discontented housewife in rural New Hampshire. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes June 25.)

**THE WILD PARTY**
George C. Wolfe and Michael John LaChiusa's musical version of Joseph Moncure March's blunt, sour, vicious little Jazz Age poem—about an orgy thrown by a lubricious vaudeville hoofer and the brutal comedian with whom she lives—wears its decadence and its sense of soiled collapse like a badge. The enormous energy that comes across the footlights feels more like theatrical hyperventilation than revelation. And Michael John LaChiusa's thirty-song score, unfortunately, has not one memorable melody. Mandy Patinkin, Eartha Kitt, and Toni Collette stand out in the cast. (4/24 & 5/1/00) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

## DANCE

**NEW YORK CITY BALLET**
June 7 at 8: "2 & 3 Part Inventions"; the première of "Triptych," choreographed by Christopher D'Amboise; and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." ♦ June 8 at 8: "Coppélia." ♦ June 9 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Summerspace," and "I'm Old Fashioned." ♦ June 10 at 2: "2 & 3 Part Inventions," "Triptych," and "Chaconne." ♦ June 10 at 8: "Swerve Poems," "The Steadfast Tin

TIM BOWER



JOHN RITTER

CENTER OF ATTENTION *The recent triminess of the White Oak company (down to just Mikhail Baryshnikov, plus four women and another man) has proved to be an ideal showcase for the individual talents of the hand-picked dancers. In the troupe's last New York stop, for instance, the Miami native Raquel Aedo pulled off an incredible feat: in her duet with Baryshnikov, "Soft Center," choreographed by Lucy Guerin, she was the one everybody watched. On the one hand, the event confirmed White Oak's mission: to offer the largely unseen riches of contemporary dance to the vast audience that Misha can draw. It also announced the arrival of a brilliant dancer—fast and technically precise, with a Caribbean flash and the mischievous confidence of the quick study.*

Soldier," "Sonatas and Interludes," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." ♦ June 11 at 3: "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," "Concerto Barocco," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." ♦ June 13 at 8: "Concerto Barocco," "The Cage," "Summerspace," and "Chaconne." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 25.)

**AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE**
June 7 at 2: "Pas des Déesses," "Diversion of Angels," "Other Dances," and "Études." ♦ June 7 at 8: "Pas des Déesses," "Diversion of Angels," "Le Corsaire" pas de deux, and "Études." ♦ June 8 at 8: "Pas des Déesses," "Diversion of Angels," "Manon" pas de deux, and "Études." ♦ June 9 at 8 and June 10 at 2 and 8: "The Taming of the Shrew." ♦ June 12-13 at 8: "Swan Lake." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through July 1.)

**WHITE OAK DANCE PROJECT**
The company founded by Mikhail Baryshnikov and Mark Morris returns, with performances by the former and a new work, "Peccadillos," by the latter. The program also includes the premières of "After Many a Summer Dies the Swan," the first work choreographed by Yvonne Rainer in twenty-five years; "See Through Knot," choreographed by John Jasperse; and "Glacial Decoy," a revival of a 1979 work by Trisha Brown. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. June 7, June 9, and June 10 at 7:30 and June 11 at 3.)

**PARSONS DANCE COMPANY**
David Parsons, who has been splitting his company's choreographic duties with Robert Battle lately, presents two programs during his fortnight's engagement. The first week's features the première of Parson's "Images," in which the dancers appear in front of projections of Howard Schatz's closeup black-and-white photographs of the troupe dancing. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. June 6-9 and June 13 at 8, June 10 at 2 and 8, and June 11 at 2 and 7:30. Through June 18.)

**BEBE MILLER COMPANY**
The five-member ensemble performs "Verge," a work in progress created in collaboration with the writer and director Talvin Wilks. Miller also presents the solo "Rhythm Studies," a sort of memoir in which she scrutinizes her own vocabulary of movement. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. June 8-11 at 8:30. Through June 18.)

**MIMI GARRARD DANCE COMPANY**
The second installment of the company's thirty-fifth-anniversary season features a première ("Mythos") and three revivals, including "Exchange," from 1984, and "Angel," from 1998. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 674-6868. June 7-10 at 8.)

**"LULU IN LA LA LAND"**
The Rosa Mei Dance Company presents an evening-length work set in a future that actually resembles various futuristic fictions presented in movies ("2001," "The Day the Earth Stood Still," "Forbidden Planet") and by Russian Futurism. (Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 924-0077. June 8-11 at 8.)

**"IN YOUR SHOES"**
The choreographer Kate Gyllenhaal offers three works, including "Wonder Where You Are," a series of solos inspired by the dancer's tabloid horoscope on the day of rehearsal, and a film of an earlier work, "Venus Return." (Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 604-4456. June 9 at 9 and June 10 at 8.)

## NIGHT LIFE
## CONCERTS

**BELL ATLANTIC JAZZ FESTIVAL**
The last laugh goes to John Zorn, the great maverick of the late twentieth century, who has entered the twenty-first with his wildly imaginative powers not merely intact, but healthier than ever. From his musical pastiches to his powerfully lyrical writing for his Masada ensemble, Zorn has proved that there's enough tough-minded form and genuine feeling in the work to back up the attitude. Some of his most persuasive work has been written for string quartets, and he'll be performing chamber works here. (Angel Orensanz Foundation, 172 Norfolk St. June 9 at 8 and 10:30.) ♦ Expect pianist Chick Corea to make a good showing with his newest band, Origin. A fully stocked, all-acoustic ensemble, Origin features Corea's spirited playing and spicy originals as well as feisty interaction with his younger band members. The bigger news is the twentieth-anniversary reunion of the Microscopic Septet, which reunites two of the most sophisticated and stylistically slippery of jazz composers and improvisers, pianist Joel Forrester and saxophonist Phillip Johnston, along with a contingent of original Micros (see also Jazz and Standards—Tonic). (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. June 11 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, visit www.jazze.com.) For more information about the festival, call 877-422-3378.

**AL GREEN / ODETTA**
Will he or won't he? Like Aretha Franklin and James Brown, Al Green is always a gamble in concert, at least since he turned his back on worldly pleasures and returned to his gospel roots. (The spiritual awakening, by now firmly installed in the canon of soul legends, involved a spurned woman and a plate of boiling grits.) In the past several years, though, Green has been reintroducing secular songs into his act with greater regularity, and at his most recent New York City appearance, last May, at the Beacon Theatre, the Right Reverend was in exemplary form. / Sharing the stage with Green will be the folk and blues legend Odetta, who has fifty years

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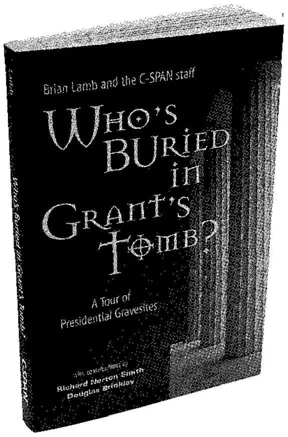
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of experience in this heartbreaking business. (Rumsey Playfield, Central Park, mid-Park at 72nd St. 877-422-3378. June 7 at 7.)

**THE ROOTS / ARTO LINDSAY**
Rap groups generally aren't known for their musicianship, but this twelve-year-old Philadelphia (a.k.a. Illadelphia) outfit uses real instruments to create an authentically funky, quintessentially musical (as opposed to digital) backdrop. Principal members Black Though (lyrics) and ?uestlove (drums) describe the Roots as the world's first hip-hop "band." On record, the boys have jammed with saxophonist Dave Murray and jazz vocalist Cassandra Wilson; live, they love to cover old rap classics and create all manner of blissful havoc. / Lindsay's ongoing hybrid project—crossing his downtown noise-jazz roots with the rhythms of Brazil—has lately taken an even more adventurous turn, as if he'd switched his recording location from Ipanema Beach to rush hour in downtown Rio. On his latest release, "Prize," he's turned up both the drum and bass and his trademark skronk guitar, and he's allowed his placid bossa-nova experiments to unravel into the bumptious racket of full-blown samba. With the **Wild Magnolias**, a troupe of Mardi Gras Indians led by the gravel-voiced Bo (Big Chief) Dollis. The group takes the stage in sparkling headdresses and whips up some of the funkiest music on this continent. (Rumsey Playfield, Central Park, mid-Park at 72nd St. 877-422-3378. June 8 at 6:30.)

**DON HENLEY**
The "thoughtful" Eagle has just returned to the pop market with "Inside Job," his first solo record in eleven years. Henley's sugarcoated Texas tenor is something of a brand in itself—one of the principal reasons why the Eagles became one of the music business's biggest sellers—but his new CD is a syrupy platter of soft-rock grooves, his trademark cynicism, and would-be political insight. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. June 8 at 8.)

**MUSIC IN THE ANCHORAGE**
The cool cavernous interior of the Brooklyn Bridge's eastern tower is home this month to Noisegate, an installation by the Austrian multi-media artists Kurt Hentschlager and Ulf Langheinrich, who go by the name Granular Synthesis. The work features a soundtrack and the projection of six disembodied heads on twenty-by-fifteen-foot video screens. The duo will also perform three concerts with musicians at the edge of the electronic frontier. The series starts with u-ziq, Scanner, and Pole. U-ziq is the nom de knob of Michael Paradinas, a twenty-eight-year-old Londoner who has turned out some of the most creative and experimental electronica of the last decade. Paradinas was trained as an architect, and his background shows in his carefully constructed compositions. Scanner (a.k.a. Robin Rimbaud) captures live cellular-phone conversations out of the airways, which he then incorporates into his music. It can be a hit-or-miss affair, but it leaves you thinking. Pole is Stefan Betke, a Berliner who makes spacious, evanescent electronic dub full of digital noise. (Cadman Plaza West, at Hicks and Front Sts., Brooklyn. For more information, call 206-6674, ext. 251. June 8 at 10.)

**KISS / TED NUGENT / SKID ROW**
A troglodytic triple bill featuring the made-up maestros of cartoon metal, the infamously obnoxious bowhunter, and the Lilliputian nineteen-eighties hair-metal act. Kiss and its comic-book stage presence sent a generation of kids into previously unexplored corridors of the drug store. Nugent is best known for terrifying vegetarians. Skid Row gave the world lead singer Sebastian Bach, who—in a delicious irony—will soon be found on Broadway, playing the lead in "Jekyll & Hyde." (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. June 9 at 7.)

**NEVILLE BROTHERS / ROBERT CRAY**
This New Orleans family affair is a democratic, organically tuned unit, but singer Aaron's range and the purity of his tone give their sound that final push over the rainbow. / Cray, began the eighties as blues music's rising young star and ended the nineties as one of soul music's best-kept secrets; while his Memphis grooves and supple vocals sometimes stray too close to Al Green's territory, he continues to turn out fine albums that serve as antidotes to boy-group pap. (World Trade Center Plaza. June 10 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

**KENNY BARRON**
As consistent as he is ubiquitous, pianist Barron turns each set into a lesson in unmannered, eloquent improvisation. (Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, 58 Seventh Ave., Brooklyn. 718-622-3330. June 10 at 7 and 9.)

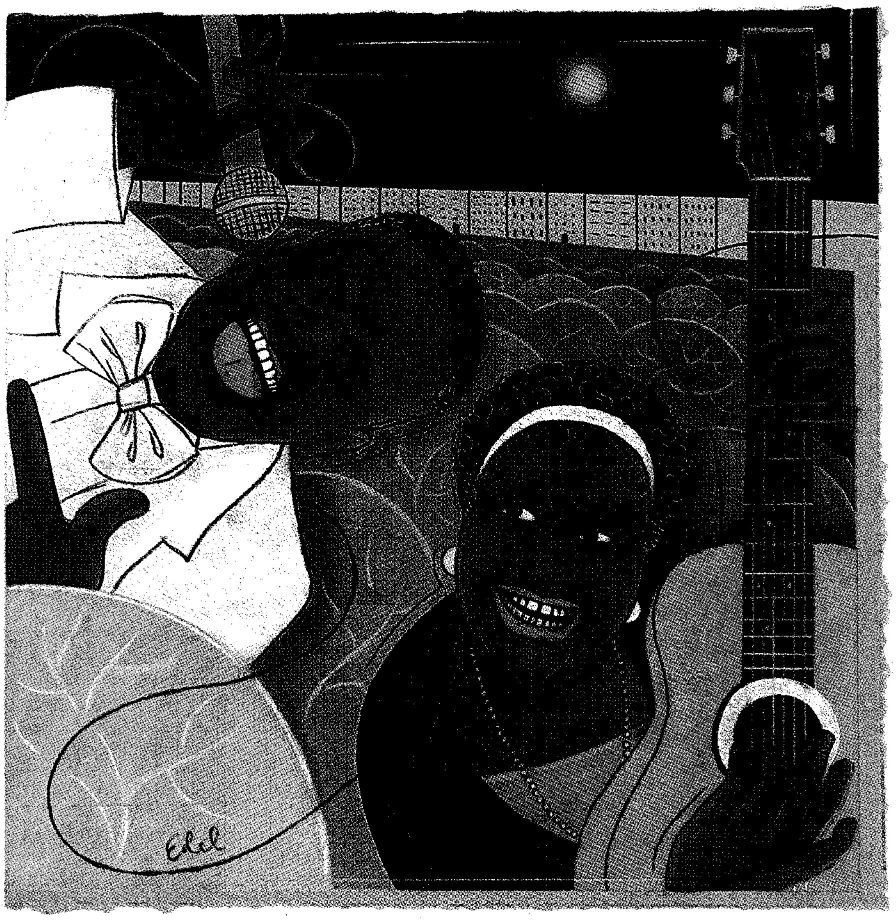
**"DEPARTURES AND DESTINATIONS"**
Andrew Hill is getting the kind of belated attention that all marginal jazz avant-gardists must dream of. The inventive pianist and composer is reunited with some of his most illustrious collaborators from the sixties, including saxophonist Jackie McLean, drummer Billy Higgins, and vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson. The whip-smart pianist Jason Moran and his trio, which includes saxophonist and mentor Greg Osby, will show where Hill's legacy has led. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 650-7148. June 10 at 7:30.)

**LOS LOBOS**
Though the Latin Playboys, Los Lobos's experimental alter ego, have become more irresistible than the original band, the Wolves present a formidable arsenal that marries fierce musicianship to remarkable depth. The group has come a long way since "La Bamba," and it's not going to look back. With Los Van Van, Cuba's most popular dance band, and Buena Vista Social Club alum Barbarito Torres, a master of the *laoud*, a Cuban twelve-stringed lutelike instrument. (World Trade Center Plaza. June 11 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

**BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**
Eighth Avenue freeze-out: the Boss starts a ten-night, long since sold-out, run. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. June 12 at 8.)

**JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL**
Starting this week, with a concert of the music of Bill Evans performed by Howard Alden and others. It's about time to formally acknowledge the compositional talents of Evans, the brilliant and influential pianist who died almost twenty years ago. Guitarist Alden (who once devoted an album to Evans's work) will present beautiful and undervalued songs, including "Time Remembered," "Turn Out the Stars," and Evans's most famous work, "Waltz for Debby." (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. June 12 at 8.) For more information about the festival, call 501-1390.

**AIMEE MANN AND MICHAEL PENN**
The former 'Til Tuesday singer (whose music helped brighten the film "Magnolia") joins the songwriting brother of Sean Penn, who also happens to be her husband, for a master class in angst-ridden tunes and knotty wordplay. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. June 13 at 8.)



*The Reverend Al Green and the blues legend Odetta share the stage in Central Park.*

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

**INDIGO GIRLS**
The beloved Georgia folk duo opens this year's Central Park SummerStage concert series. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 360-2777. A benefit concert. June 13 at 7.)

## CLUBS

*Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.*

**BOWERY BALLROOM**
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—June 8: The side project of Giant Sand veterans Joey Burns and John Convertino, **Calexico** conjures up the darkness of a Western desert where danger lurks at night. Bassist Burns and drummer Convertino maintain a steady watch, but the pedal-steel guitars, accordion, violin, and trumpets portend tragedy.

**BROWNIES**
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—June 7: **A Don Piper Situation**, a versatile pop trio led by Austin transplant Piper, whose gimlet-eyed songcraft sparked a justly deserved big-label bidding

war in 1997; alas, due to record-industry jitters, the Situation's long-awaited début, "Saturate," is only available at live shows. With the banjo-driven, lo-fi indie pop of **Adult Rodeo.** June 8: Paris's **Tahiti 80** makes timeless and lovely pop as refreshing as a cool aperitif. Its full-length Stateside début album, "Puzzle" (on the clever little Chicago label Minty Fresh), was produced by Ivy guitarist Andy Chase and features contributions from Fountains of Wayne keyboardist Adam Schlesinger. June 9: The arty and sexy sounds of **New Wet Kojak,** a band that features Girls Against Boys alums Scott McCloud and Johnny Temple. With New Jersey's **Radio 4,** which does a fine job of updating the post-punk sounds of the Clash and Gang of Four, and the instrumental post-rock of Toronto's **Do Make Say Think.** June 10-11: The crashing bumper-car stylings of **Superdrag** and the power pop of the **Figgs,** who, after a stint as Graham Parker's touring band, and a couple of bad major-label experiences, are now back releasing fine records on independent labels. Their latest is "For EP Fans Only." With the cast-iron vocalist **Peter Searcy,** who writes powerful and economical tracks about the changes lovers put each other through, on June 10.

**FEZ**
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—June 10: **Tahiti 80** (see Brownies). The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

**IRVING PLAZA**
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—June 7: Welsh-born singer-songwriter **David Gray** has a thin, wiry voice and employs electronica-infused ambient accompaniment that, in an odd but rewarding combination, will please Bob Dylan and Elton John fans alike. Gray appears in support of his new album, "White Ladder," which is on technology-embracing folk-rocker and recording industry entrepreneur Dave Matthews' ATO Records. June 8-10: The jam-band phenomenon **Moe.**

**MAXWELL'S**
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—June 9: The **Wild Magnolias** (see Concerts—The Roots and Arto Lindsay). June 10: **New Wet Kojak** and **Do Make Say Think** (see Brownies). With the rage-driven guitar work of England's **Six by Seven.**

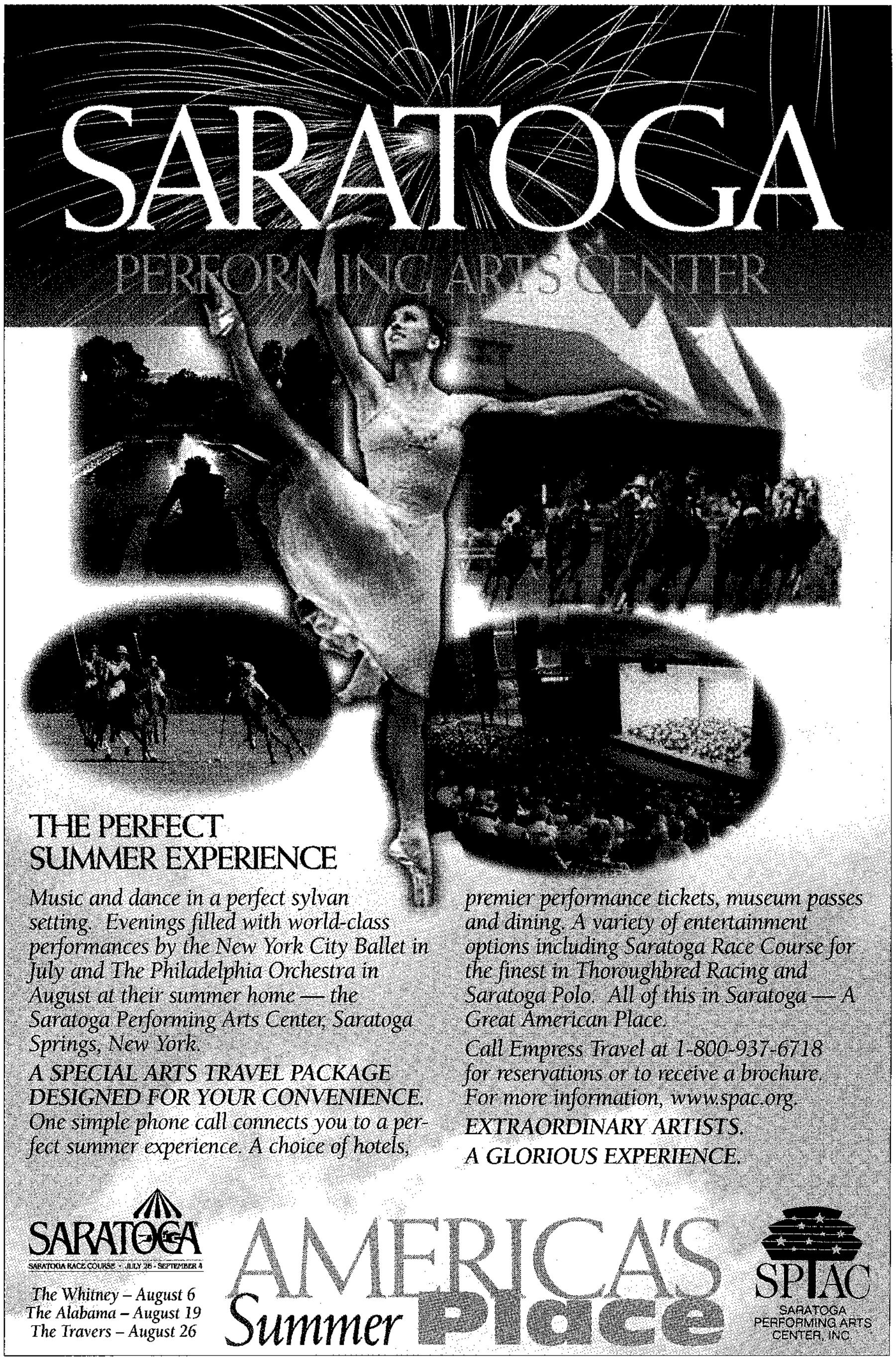
**MERCURY LOUNGE**
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—June 7: The **Continental Drifters,** featuring Peter Holsapple of the dB's, Vicki Peterson of the Bangles, and Susan Cowsill of the Cowsills, turns out sunny hootenanny folk-pop. With former Dream Syndicate front man **Steve Wynn.** June 8: **Six by Seven** (see Maxwell's). June 11: **Peter Case** belongs to the Southern California songwriting school: his anthems juxtapose a choirboy's voice with noirish tales of redemption.

**TONIC**
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—June 7: Sonic Youth guitarist **Thurston Moore** performs an acoustic show. With a trio comprised of percussionist **Ikue Mori,** Sonic Youth bassist **Kim Gordon,** and turntablist **DJ Olive,** with special guest computer-keyboard manipulator and noted producer **Jim O'Rourke.**

**S.O.B.'S**
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—June 7: A night of top-shelf accordion-driven music, Louisiana style, with **Rosie Ledet & the Zydeco Playboys.** June 8: **Hugh Masekela.** It has been more than thirty years since "Grazing in the Grass" was No. 1 on the R. & B. charts, but the great trumpeter still has the same deliciously delicate touch. Dining.

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

**BLUE NOTE**
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through June 11: The **James Carter Electric Project** and the **Russell Malone** quartet. Although he's just simultaneously released two recordings, one a funk project, the other a European-flavored release, saxophonist James Carter will certainly be featuring material from the former at this engage-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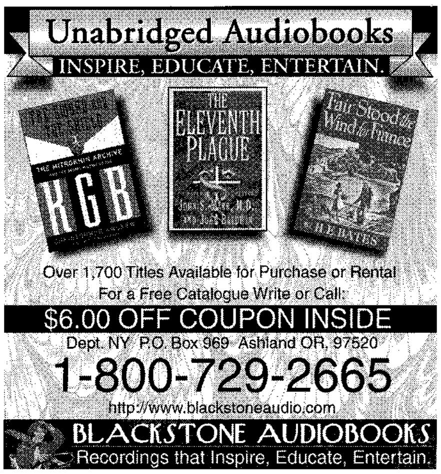
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SILVER SHOP
3164 Peachtree Rd., Dept. NY, Atlanta, GA 30305 / Mon.-Sat. 10-5

ment graced by the knockout rhythm team of bassist **Jamaldeen Tacuma** and drummer **Calvin Weston.** / Having paid his dues with the likes of Harry Connick, Jr., and Diana Krall, guitarist Russell Malone is stepping out on his own. Thankfully, he's as graceful a stylist as he is a fluent technician.

**CARLYLE HOTEL**
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through June 24, **Bobby Short.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Barbara Carroll** is in attendance through July 22.

**IRIDIUM**
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through June 11: The renowned bassist **Ron Carter** fronts a mix-and-match trio with the expert drummer **Joey Barron,** who's usually heard south of Houston Street, and the gifted pianist **Eric Reed.** Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

**JAZZ STANDARD**
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through June 11: A live spinoff from the recent tribute recording "As Long As You're Living Yours: The Music of Keith Jarrett," this curious program may offer only a few of the album's worthy participants—including vibraphonist **Mike Manieri** and saxophonists **George Garzone** and **Jimmy Greene**—but it does present a chance to hear the lyrical pianist **Denny Zeitlin,** an infrequent presence in town. Dining.

**KNITTING FACTORY**
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Highlights of the Bell Atlantic Jazz Festival. June 7: **James (Blood) Ulmer** and the **Sun Ra Arkestra.** Time hasn't dulled Ulmer's edge—pulling twisted chords and shards of melody from his guitar while half barking, half drawling spacey blues, he sounds as nasty as ever. / The maestro has returned to Saturn, but his band plays on under the skillful direction of longtime saxophonist **Marshall Allen.** The unexpected is still to be expected. June 8: **Matthew Shipp** is tenor terrorist David S. Ware's pianist and an integral component in orchestrating the celebratory squall that arises out of Ware's quartet. On his own, Shipp can balance his post-Cecil Taylor keyboard eruptions with pools of lyric calm—or, if the mood strikes him, not. June 9: The **Jeff (Tain) Watts Experience.** Probably the most respected and in-demand mainstream jazz drummer, Watts has powered the bands of, among many others, two Marsalis brothers, Wynton and Branford, but still can't resist the siren call of leading his own high-powered ensemble. June 10: The **Dave Douglas** sextet. The downtown trumpeter's sextet is not the most daring of his many eclectic projects. His recent album, "Soul on Soul," with its respectful reworkings of Mary Lou Williams's compositions, displays a strong traditionalist streak, one that reminds us of Douglas's roots as a young bebop virtuoso. But almost everything that this extravagantly creative bandleader presents is a vividly reimagined vision of what contemporary jazz can be. June 10: **Mario Pavone's Nu Trio.** As one of the components of the late Thomas Chapin's popular trio, bassist Pavone is an old hand at tight-knit improvisation. June 11: With the untimely demise of trumpeter Lester Bowie last year, the **Art Ensemble of Chicago** might now consider changing its motto from "Great Black Music Ancient to the Future" to "Never Say Die." Reduced to a trio consisting of reeds player **Roscoe Mitchell,** bassist **Malachi Favors Magoustut,** and drummer **Famoudou Don Moye,** this band of intrepid avant-jazz musicians simply refuses to throw in the towel. June 11: The **Joe Maneri** quartet, with special guest **Barre Philips.** The microtonal world of saxophonist Maneri and his violin-playing son **Mat** isn't easily penetrated by other musicians, but the acclaimed bassist Phillips did a pretty terrific job of it on the recent album "Tales of Rohnlief." For the adventurous of spirit, this could be a transcendent experience.

**TONIC**
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—June 9: It's great to see the masterminds of the legendary Microscopic Septet, pianist **Joel Forrester** and saxophonist **Phillip Johnston,** making music again. There's a certain chemistry that these two offbeat heroes get going that just can't be duplicated (see also Concerts—Bell Atlantic Jazz Festival). June 10: **Anthony Coleman's Sephardic Tinge,** with the indispensable team of drummer **Mike Savin** and bassist **Ben Street,** brings to mind a bar mitzvah with Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk taking turns at the piano.

**VILLAGE VANGUARD**
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through June 11: **The Leon Parker Percussive Jazz Ensemble.** Since he's consciously veered away from mainstream jazz recently, it's been impossible to predict which direction Parker will take his music. The only given is that he's still a marvellous percussionist with a world of possibilities at hand. But wouldn't it be great to see him swinging behind a drum kit just for old times' sake? The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

# ART
## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Now! Modern Photographs from the Permanent Collection."** Through Oct. 22. ♦ **"After Nicolas Poussin: New Etchings by Leon Kossoff."** Through Aug. 13. ♦ **"Art and Oracle: Spirit Voices of Africa."** Through July 30. ♦ **"Painters in Paris: 1895-1950"** presents more than a hundred modernist works from the museum's collection, by thirty-eight masters. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"The World of Scholar's Rocks."** Through Aug. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Making Choices."** The twenty-four-part show concentrates on works made between 1920 and 1960, drawn exclusively from the museum's extensive holdings, in a series of tightly focussed exhibitions, several devoted to a single artist (Man Ray, Cartier-Bresson, Morandi). Closing, in stages, on Aug. 22, Sept. 19, and Sept. 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"1900: Art at the Crossroads,"** curated by Robert Rosenblum, focusses on the turn of the twentieth century, when abstraction was just a gleam in art's eye. The intention is to compare and contrast—classical vs. avant-garde, landscape vs. portraiture, Danish vs. Spanish (some twenty-six countries are represented), and so on. But as soon as the red carpet is (literally) rolled out in the first gallery, re-creating an exposition at the 1900 Paris World's Fair, insipid academic painting gets the upper hand. The cloying piety of Bouguereau's "Regina Angelorum" seems almost gritty next to the Alpine tumble of rosy babies in Léon Frédérick's "The Stream," a picture so ghastly that it's mesmerizing (the wall text calls it "a cornucopia of infant flesh"). If you continue past the salon-style deluge of this opening act, you'll be intermittently rewarded by fine examples of Cézanne, Hodler, and Hammershoi, among others. But on the whole the show could be subtitled "When Bad Art Happens to Good Museums." Through Sept. 10. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

**WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART**
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"Edward Hopper, Printmaker."** Through July 16. ♦ **"Carnival Strippers: Photographs by Susan Meiselas."** Through Sept. 10. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 9.)

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**
Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The Triassic equivalent of professional wrestling is here: **"Fighting Dinosaurs"** showcases one of the greatest paleontological finds of the past century. In the Gobi desert almost thirty years ago, a Polish-Mongolian team came across the remains of two dinosaurs, a carnivorous velociraptor and a vegetarian protoceratops, apparently caught in a brawl to the death. More recent finds, including early mammals and new links between dinosaurs and birds, are also on view, along with video projections, a diorama, and chip-away re-creations of digs. Oddly enough, it was geopolitics as much as shovels and picks which brought most of this kiddie catnip to light: Mongolia's post-Soviet independence allowed American scientists to return to the region they had first excavated in the twenties. Through Oct. 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

**BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART**
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Besides being the charismatic teacher of Hopper and O'Keeffe, among others, William Merritt Chase is remembered as the top-hatted dandy who inaugurated American Impressionism in Long Island's Shinnecock hills. Before he moved there in 1890, however, Chase spent five summers in Brooklyn, painting plein-air landscapes of Prospect Park, the Gowanus bay, and other sites. On display not far from where they were painted, these thirty-five small, spacious oils and pastels show women from another era strolling around familiar lawns and ponds. Part of the fascination of the show is in Chase's own stylistic vacillation between sketchy, gray tone poems and grassy, sunstruck reportage. On a cloudy day, Chase was Whistler; on a sunny one, he was Pissarro. Through Aug. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

**GROLIER CLUB**
47 E. 60th St. (838-6690)—**"The Art of Publishers' Bookbindings: 1815-1915."** Before Oprah, the Industrial Revolution brought books to a mass-market audience. At first, volumes were sold in temporary wrappers, but by the eighteen-twenties publishers realized that readers judged a book by its cover and began to bind their offerings in-house. The many treasures in this delightful show range from a lavish Shakespeare cover made of papier-mâché which resembles a medieval carving to a wacky copy of "Nimrod in the North," with ice dripping off the snowcapped letters in the title. Through July 29. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5.)

## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

*Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.*

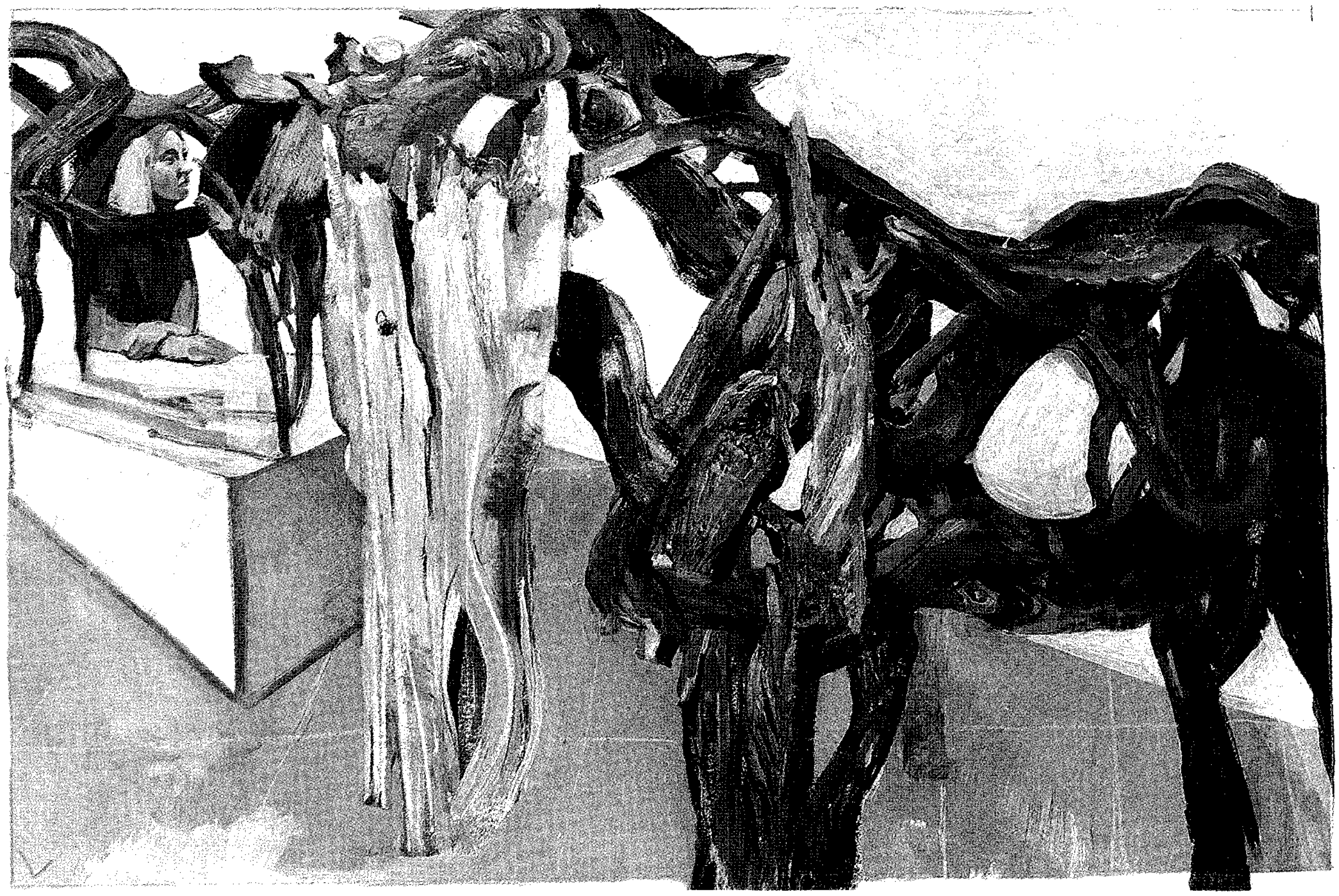
**INKA ESSENHIGH**
If they weren't so elegantly crafted, Essenhigh's polished, surreal narratives would be maddeningly coy. Who are these headless humanoid creatures, in their rippling sci-fi sweatsuits? Why are they climbing up crags, picnicking in cornfields, congregating at banquets, and writhing on hospital gurneys? As it is, the pleasure of teasing out Essenhigh's encrypted adventures is magnified, both by the Aubrey Beardsley-like linear precision of these paintings and by a strange confidence that some genuine narrative is taking place, at least in the artist's imagination. Through June 24. (Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929.)

**SETH MICHAEL FORMAN**
These oils offer us highly improbable little vignettes: a burly man in briefs prepares to decapitate a clown; two tenors elegize a pig; a person of flamboyantly indeterminate gender wades into a lake. Set against gloomy rural backdrops, these improbable tableaux don't really feel imaginary: they're set pieces, demonstrations of Forman's knack for rendering objects in a charmingly clunky faux-folk style. Through June 24. (Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338.)

### *Short List*

**FREDERICK EDWIN CHURCH**
Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 744-2300.
Through July 15.

**LORRAINE SHEMESH**
Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 987-1655.
Through June 9.



HORSE TRADER *The sculptor Deborah Butterfield, at the Thorp gallery's new digs in Chelsea, stands behind her bronzes.*

RICCARDO VECCHIO

## GALLERIES-CHELSEA

**DEBORAH BUTTERFIELD**
Six sculptures of horses, originally assembled out of sticks, driftwood, charred logs, brambles, et al., which have been recast in bronze and painted to appear like their original materials. This nearly flawless trompe-l'oeil trick of turning bronze into wood is the least of Butterfield's effects. More impressive is the way she conjures shades of equine personality—their muscularity and fragility, their weariness or wariness—by paying close attention to the quirks of the wood. Through July 28. (Thorp, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 691-6565.)

**RACKSTRAW DOWNES**
The English-born painter's oils depict huge interior spaces, including a vast barracks that belonged to Donald Judd. The sites are monuments to hubris, and one suspects Downes may have begun the paintings as a gentle rebuke. The results, though, are quietly thrilling, even tender. Judd's spare, concrete structures, which open to glimpses of scrub and yucca, seem beautifully airy, cool, and tranquil. Looking at them, you feel that a rapprochement between two utterly different artists has taken place—as unexpected, in its way, as Alice Neel's portrait of Andy Warhol. Through June 10. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 366-4774.)

**PAUL GEORGES**
In the fifties, Georges was hailed, by Fairfield Porter, among others, as a figurative painter with star potential—a brash, cocksure talent who could match the expansive spirit of abstraction. This mini-retrospective gives a sense of why he has remained a respected but marginal figure. Painting giant self-portraits, nudes, or allegorical scenes, Georges attacks the canvas with sweeping, impulsive gusto. The results are extravagant and exhilarating, but frequently harebrained, as in "The Big Apple," a painting of a blond model holding a Red Delicious on which Georges has cursorily painted Manhattan's skyline. Through June 10. (Center for Figurative Painting, 115 W. 30th St. 868-3452.)

**ELLIOTT GREEN / STEVE MUMFORD**
Like a cross between Dick Tracy and saltwater taffy, Green's cartoony figures stretch long, stylized limbs to kick, tickle, comfort, and jab one another. The narrative details are obscure, but the basic predicament will feel familiar to anyone who has spent a long car ride with a passel of siblings. Green makes cramped, irritable intimacy look fun. Mumford, on the other hand, paints big, sardonically sublime landscapes, some of which are partly based on dioramas at the Museum of Natural History. They're outtakes from a spectacle-crazed male imagination. Drowning cars sink through schools of barracuda, a puma reclines comfortably in the twilit New Jersey Meadowlands, and, in the silliest and most satisfying image of all, an enormous, demonic sailfish plunges ecstatically into a school of minnows. Through June 24. (Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.)

**JOACHIM KOESTER**
This Danish-born, New York-based artist gives new meaning to the phrase "freeze frame" in a slide installation depicting Greenland's portion of the ice cap. The barren images of sky and ice fade in and out, nearly indistinguishable from one another, recalling the old joke about the polar bear in a snowstorm. The subtitles are excerpted from the diary of A. E. Nordenskiöld, a Swedish scientist and the first European to explore the region, in 1870. Through June 10. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770.)

### *Short List*

**WALTON FORD**
Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St.
563-4474. Through June 30.

**VANESSA JANE PHAFF**
I-20 Gallery, 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100.
Through June 17.

## GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

**SERENA BOCCHINO**
These breezy, abstract drawings on vellum have the instant appeal of a catchy pop tune. Bocchino's scribbly graphite doodles, punctuated by bright blips and swooshes of paint, have the spontaneous, improvisational quality of jazz. But while her approach derives directly from Kandinsky's conviction that painting models itself on music, it's her debt to the painter Cy Twombly which strikes the loudest chord. Through June 17. (Exhibit A, 160 Mercer St. 343-0230.)

**INSOOK CHOI**
"Voices in Ruins" is an audio installation by the composer-in-residence at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications. The voices belong to such seminal political figures from the twentieth century as Teddy Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and John F. Kennedy. The ruins, according to this installation, are abstract nouns: history, perception. A camera mounted in a corner of the gallery detects movement, triggering audio tracks. In this way, history never repeats itself. Through June 24. (Dorsky Gallery, 379 West Broadway. 966-6170.)

**GARY GISSLER**
What appear to be small smudges and scratches on otherwise pristine white panels (think schmutz on a Ryman) are actually infinitesimal words, painstakingly handwritten by the artist. Gissler infuses the formal rigors of minimalism with the navel-gazing of Sean Landers. What prevents the show from being more than a "your name etched on a grain of rice" parlor trick is the tension between the spare, taut compositions and the abject poetry of the text. Through June 30. (123 Watts Gallery, 123 Watts St. 219-1482.)

### *Short List*

**JOHN CHAMBERLAIN**
Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St.
431-9224. Through June 10.

# AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

**SOTHEBY'S**
June 7-8: An auction of coins. ♦ Twentieth-century decorative art works, culminating in more than fifty Tiffany lamps and windows. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

**CHRISTIE'S**
June 7: Fine jewelry. ♦ June 8: Twentieth-century decorative art, including highly desirable works by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Frank Lloyd Wright, Gustav Stickley, and Louis Comfort Tiffany; the day concludes with an auction of a two-story guest house on East Fifty-second Street, designed by Philip Johnson, in 1949-50, for Mrs. John D. Rockefeller III. Also on June 8 is a separate sale of watches. ♦ June 12-13: Antiquities, including (on the opening evening) an exceptional single-owner collection of a hundred and fifty-seven ancient Greek vases, dating from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic period. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

**CHRISTIE'S EAST**
June 7: Moderately priced works of twentieth-century decorative art. ♦ June 8: Jewelry. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0430.)

**DOYLE**
An auction of turn-of-the-twentieth-century European decorative art works, including an extensive selection of bowls, vases, and other objets d'art by the noted glassmaker René Lalique. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. June 7.)

**SWANN**
June 7: An international auction of modern art, presented by Swann and out-of-town firms to which the gallery is allied, takes place simultaneously at each participant's premises—in Cologne, Vienna, Milan, Madrid, Zurich, Paris, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, as well as New York (where the activities begin at Swann at noon). The sale's highlights include paintings by Manet (from Étude Tajan, in Paris), Giacometti (from Galerie Koller, in Zurich), and Kandinsky (from Kunsthaus Lempertz, in Cologne). ♦ June 8: A sale of autographs, particularly notable for political Americana. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

# PHOTOGRAPHY

**MORTON BARTLETT**
A self-taught sculptor and photographer, Bartlett (1909-92) molded half-life-size children from plaster, tailored clothing for them, then posed and photographed them, both dressed and undressed. The gallery compares his "special fascination with children" to Mark Twain's and Lewis Carroll's, though his work is far less humorous and more ominous than theirs. Through June 24. (Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819.)

**ROBERT BOURDEAU**
Bourdeau shows abandoned American and European coal mines, textile mills, grain elevators, and steel plants as monuments to the industrial age. Look now, before they're all turned into museums, condos, and Internet startup offices. Through June 17. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

**HELEN LEVITT**
For more than sixty years, Helen Levitt has been the master of the street sublime. Two men leap for a basketball and are held in a frieze worthy of Paul Taylor's dancers. Stoops and vacant lots become stages for the impromptu performances of childhood. This survey includes many of Levitt's greatest hits, some rarely seen color work, and large new prints of her nineteen-thirties chalk-drawing images. Through June 29. (Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.)

**MALERIE MARDER**
A spinoff of last season's much talked about group show, "Another Girl, Another Planet," Marder's "Because I Was Flesh" puts out plenty of "flesh," but doesn't deliver on the "because." A sense of discomfort in her large color prints of family, friends, and lovers makes the work compelling, if only for a moment. Through June 10. (Lawrence Rubin Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444.)

**ZWELETHU MTHETHWA**
A series on black South African men, who are observed in informal postures, is accompanied by several large-format color portraits of black South African women at home. The sitters guard and display their small rooms, which are revealingly papered with advertisements for products and life styles unlikely to materialize anytime soon. Through June 24. (Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701.)

**TOKIHIRO SATO**
Over long exposures, Sato moves around the landscape with a small light, stopping to point it at the camera for a few moments at a time. The beam burns a tiny spot on the film, which only records the artist's darker presence as a ghostly mist. In this way, he creates mini-constellations, something like a field of fireflies or a tangle of Christmas lights, wherever he goes. The effect is particularly beautiful along a short stretch of rocky Japanese coastline, and less satisfying amidst modern architecture. Through July 28. (Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450.)

**MIMI WLODARCZYK**
"Lower East Side Stories" is a tribute to one of Manhattan's oldest neighborhoods. One hundred black-and-white pictures, including street portraits, dreamy prints of exotic-looking community-garden plants, and a whimsically scrumptious shot of a Katz's Delicatessen hot dog, are all printed in uniform size and hung in a continuous belt of images around the walls. Throughout the range of styles on show, the artist's respectful intimacy with her home turf comes through. Opens June 6. (A.I.R. Gallery, 40 Wooster St. 966-0799.)

**AMIR ZAKI**
Zaki's title, "Photographs From," suggests the physical perches from which he shoots, the roofs of Los Angeles buildings and parking structures. His night surveillance takes in only incidental light—street lamps over deserted back lots, floodlights on a skyscraper, and one window with blurry signs of life inside. Through June 24. (Golden, 526 W. 26th St. 727-8304.)

**INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY**
1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—Nathan Lyons's **"Riding First Class on the Titanic."** Through June 18. ♦ James Nachtwey's **"Testimony."** Through July 23. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

## *Short List*

**MARIA MIESENBERGER**
Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600. Through July 7.

**JURGEN TELLER**
Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753. Through July 28.

*See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum, and the Whitney Museum.*

# TABLES FOR TWO

**SUCELT COFFEE SHOP**
200 W. 14th St. (242-0593)—This always packed and lively diner holds only twelve stools along a single U-shaped counter. High on the back wall is a hand-painted menu listing sixty or so items, in Spanish and English, from tripe soup and eggs any style to tamales and flan. Most customers are regulars who never bother to look at it. They just order over the heads of the lucky seated patrons, the way you would at a bar at happy hour. During the course of a meal, the room fills up and empties again and again, like a subway car. This isn't a coincidence: Sucelt's tiny storefront is located about six feet from the I.R.T. entrance, and the subway furnishes the restaurant's rhythm, much of its clientele, and the floor show.

For less than the cost of a round trip to work, you can get a Cuban sandwich—ham, Swiss cheese, roasted pork, and pickles on a buttered roll, pressed in a two-sided grill until it's as slim as a cell phone. The specials of the day stew away in ten or so stainless-steel trays, and it doesn't really matter which one you choose. None of the slow-cooked meats—roasted chicken, shredded beef, pot roast, oxtail—require a knife to cut through, and their juices boast a spicy, one-pot richness that will have you scouring your plate.

To wash it all down, there are *batidas*—blender drinks made with such tropical fruits as guanabana, soursop, and passion fruit. The *morir soñando* ("to die dreaming"), which combines milk, sugar, ice, and fresh-squeezed orange juice, tastes like a Creamsicle on a vitamin binge, and the *café con leche* is as hot, dark, and serious as the *batidas* are sweet, cold, and frothy.

Sucelt's opened in the seventies, when West Fourteenth was still a kind of Latin Main Street. Last August, six years after the founding patriarch, Juan Grana, retired, his daughters, Ivonne and Jehnny, repainted the walls from cordovan to lime green, but otherwise not much has changed: whoever stands behind the counter asks the eternal questions ("White or yellow rice? Black or red beans? To go or to stay?"), and year after year the place easily maintains what must be the best cost-to-flavor ratio in the city. (Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Entrées $2.50-$8.)

—*Kevin Conley*

# CLASSICAL MUSIC OPERA

**METROPOLITAN OPERA**
The company launches this year's free performances in the city's parks with a concert version of "Rigoletto," featuring soprano Youngok Shin, tenor Roberto Aronica, baritone Carlo Guelfi, and bass Dimitri Kavrakos. Nello Santi conducts. (Great Lawn, Central Park. June 13 at 8. No tickets necessary. For rain-date information, call 362-6000.)

**AMATO OPERA COMPANY**
Presenting "The Marriage of Figaro," in English. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. June 9-10 at 7:30 and June 11 at 2:30. Through June 18.)

**THEODORAKIS'S "ELECTRA"**
Born in 1925, on the island of Chios, Mikis Theodorakis earned worldwide renown through his film scores for such classics as "Zorba the Greek," "Z," and "Serpico." Though his concert works have failed to gain similar popularity with the international public, Theodorakis has been prolific in most of the principal "classical" genres, including such large-scale works as symphonies (of which he has written seven), oratorios, and ballets. He has also played a high-profile role in Greek politics, loudly protesting the nation's sporadically repressive government from his soapboxes as chairman of the Greek United Democratic Left Party (beginning in 1963) and as a member of the Greek Parliament (to which he was first elected in 1964). Following several years of oppression (he was imprisoned, and his music banned), he moved to Paris, and began a period of exile that would last until 1974. Still an important voice in culture and politics, he has been nominated for the 2000 Nobel Peace Prize thanks to his long involvement in human rights and environmental issues. As one might expect of someone so intimately involved in Greek music and society, the plays of Hellenic antiquity proved irresistible as fodder for operas. His Sophocles-derived "Electra," which here receives its United States première,

is the second of Theodorakis's "Lyric Trilogy" based on ancient Greek tragedies; unveiled in 1995, in Luxembourg, its bookends in the triptych are his settings of "Medea" (1991) and "Antigone" (1999). In this concert performance, mezzo-soprano Reveka Mavrovitis appears in the title role, members of the Greek National Opera round out the cast, and the Nyack College Chorale and Russian Chamber Chorus of New York sing the choral parts. Peter Tiboris conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 11 at 2. Performed in Greek, with English supertitles.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

**FLORILEGIUM CHAMBER CHOIR**
JoAnn Rice directs Ginastera's rarely heard "Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah," in addition to choral pieces by Kodály, Wolf, and Purcell. (German Church, 315 W. 22nd St. June 7 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

**MANHATTAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**
Richard Auldon Clark conducting. June 8 at 1 and June 11 at 2: Performing Weill's "Mahagonny Songspiel" and his "Berliner Requiem," featuring soprano Eileen Clark, mezzo-soprano Karen Goldfeder, baritone Richard Holmes, and the members of the Songfellows vocal quartet. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Admission by contribution.) ♦ June 11 at 8:30: The première of Howard Cass's "Breakfast of Champions" (based on the Kurt Vonnegut novel), as well as two works featuring trumpeter Chris Gekker: Eric Ewazen's Concerto for Trumpet and Strings and David Snow's "On Clearwater Mountain." (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

**RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY**
Marius Constant, still active at the age of seventy-five, may be most famous for having composed the theme music for "The Twilight Zone," but his importance on the French cultural scene has been considerably broader. After graduating from conservatory in his native Bucharest, he moved to Paris, where he studied with Messiaen and Nadia Boulanger; collaborated with Honegger on the original music for Abel Gance's silent-film classic "Napoléon"; contributed notable scores to ballets by Maurice Béjart and Roland Petit; grew interested in the musical possibilities of surrealism and chance operations; and for many years oversaw the Ars Nova ensemble (noted for its pioneering work in group improvisation). George Rothman, the Riverside Symphony's music director, has taken to Constant's output with missionary zeal, and in this concert he conducts the first American performance of the composer's "103 Regards dans l'Eau," a violin concerto in all but name, composed in 1981, and here spotlighting Olivier Charlier. Two further French curiosities complete the program: a new orchestral transcription (by the conductor Yan Pascal Tortellier) of Ravel's Piano Trio and Debussy's little-known, ill-fated ballet score "Khamma," which was commissioned in 1910 by Isadora Duncan's rival Maud Allan and completed two years later (with Charles Koechlin helping out on the orchestration) but not performed until 1924—and then as a concert piece rather than to accompany a staged production. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. June 8 at 8.)

**GOLDMAN MEMORIAL BAND**
The concert band, conducted by David Eaton, performs Corigliano's "Gazebo Dances," Auber's Overture to "The Bronze Horse," and Berlioz's "Rakoczy" March, among many other works. (New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park. June 11 at 1:30. No tickets necessary beyond garden admission. ♦ Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. June 11 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

**NEW YORK CITY GAY MEN'S CHORUS**
In an evening that includes appearances by Joel Grey, Betty Buckley, Joyce Castle, and Tony Roberts (among other guests from the world of musical theatre), Barry Oliver directs the première of a work by composer Larry Grossman and lyricist Michael Korie celebrating the past century of gay life in New York. In addition, the ensemble's founding director,

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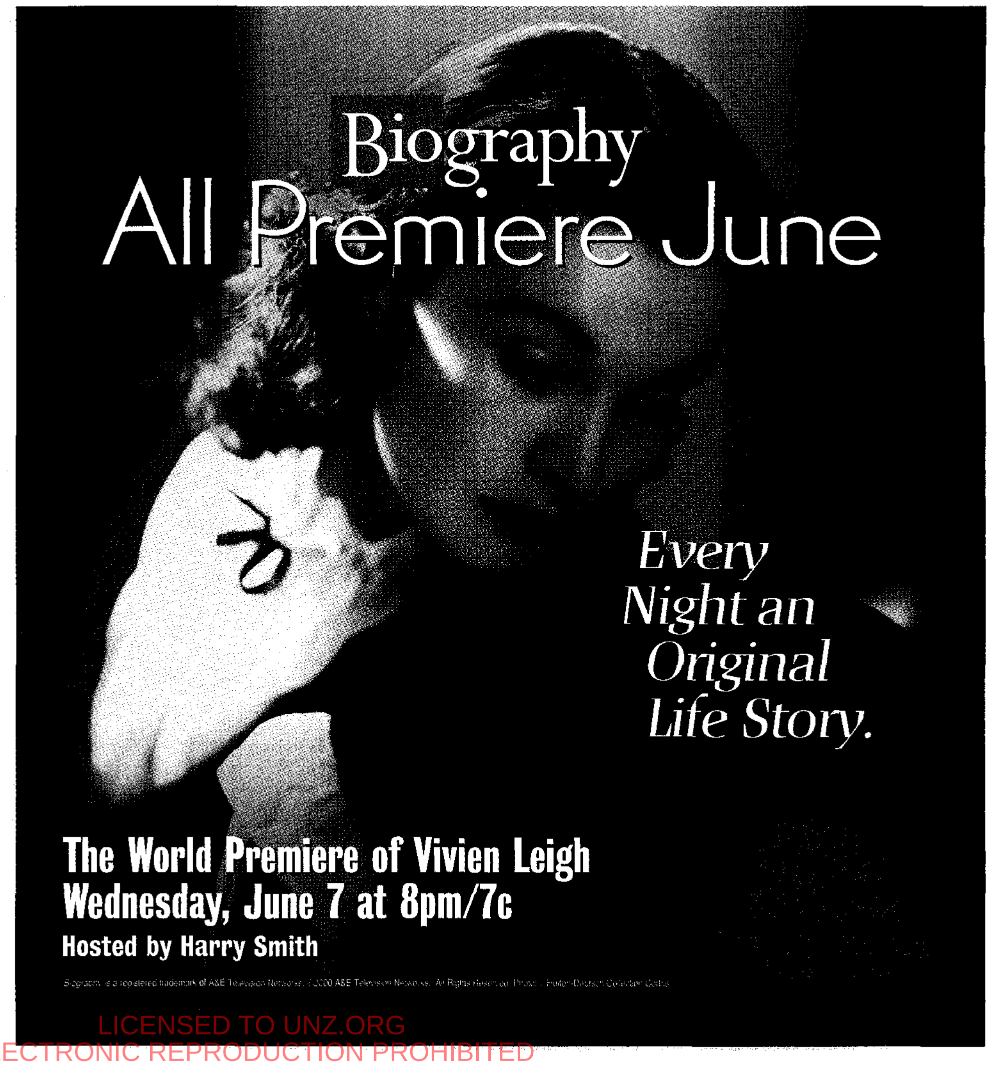
Biography
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Wednesday, June 7 at 8pm/7c
Hosted by Harry Smith

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Gary W. Miller, assumes the podium to lead pieces by Dean X Johnson, Leonard Bernstein, and others. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 12 at 7:30.)

## RECITALS

**ST. LUKE'S CHAMBER ENSEMBLE**
Three composers assist the group in performances of their music: Lukas Foss (doubling as pianist), Steven Mackey (playing guitar), and Joan Tower (serving as pianist for her "Très Lent" and "Petroushskates"). (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. June 7 at 7. For information about tickets, call 594-6100.)

**MORDECAI SHEHORI**
The pianist performs Mozart's Sonata in A Minor (K. 310), Brahms's "Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel," Ravel's Sonatine, and Liszt's three "Petrarch Sonnets" and "Mephisto Waltz No. 1." (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. June 7 at 8.)

**COSMOPOLITAN CHAMBER PLAYERS**
Soprano Brenda Feliciano, flutist Marco Granados, violinist Eric Grossman, and pianist Pablo Zinger offer works by Sarasate, Villa-Lobos, Carlos Guastavino, and Piazzolla. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. June 7 at 8. For information about tickets, call 873-7784.)

**PATRICK GRANT GROUP**
Four electronic-keyboard players and a percussionist offer the première of Grant's "tHE wEIGHTS oF nUMBERS—pART 2," "50USA" (a march with fifty microvariations which deconstructs the music of John Philip Sousa), and several of the group's microtonal works. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. June 7 at 8.)

**MAYA BEISER**
The cellist, a champion of new music for her instrument, has staked a particular claim in the domain of international crossover repertoire. In this concert, she collaborates with the Palestinian oud player Simon Shaheen in one of his compositions, and also plays pieces by the Brazilian percussionist Nana Vasconcelos, the American drummer Glen Velez, and composers Evan Ziporyn (whose works are inspired by both Georgian and Balinese music) and Chinary Ung (who draws on his Cambodian heritage). (Joe's Pub at the Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. June 7 at 8:30. For information about tickets, call 239-6200.)

**BARGEMUSIC**
June 8 at 8: A benefit concert in which Fred Sherry and Peter Wiley play a cello duet by the nineteenth-century composer Friedrich August Kummer, and are assisted by colleagues in Arensky's oddly scored String Quartet in A Minor (for violin, viola, and two cellos) and Schubert's C-Major String Quintet. ♦ June 9 at 7:30: Presenting Mozart's C-Major Violin Sonata (K. 296), Strauss's Piano Quartet, and Schumann's Piano Quintet. ♦ June 10 at 7:30: Mozart's D-Major Divertimento for Strings (K. 136), Arensky's A-Minor Quartet, and Alfredo D'Ambrosio's Suite for Strings (Op. 8). ♦ June 11 at 4: Mr. Wiley and pianist Pedja Muzijevic perform Shostakovich's Cello Sonata, Christian Bor and Mr. Muzijevic offer Ravel's Violin Sonata, and all three join for Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 2. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

**MANNES BACH INSTITUTE**
The Mannes College of Music's study institute on the Leipzig master presents members of its faculty in two all-Bach recitals this week. June 8 at 8: André Emelianoff plays the Cello Suite No. 4, mezzo-soprano D'Anna Fortunato offers several cantata arias, Stephen Hamilton performs the C-Minor Passacaglia and Fugue for Organ, and the concert concludes with the "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 6. (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ June 12 at 8: Various keyboard and chamber works, including the C-Minor Concerto for Violin and Oboe (featuring Lewis Kaplan and John Ferrillo). (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Tickets at the door.)

**SPECULUM MUSICAE**
Three members of this modern-music ensemble—clarinettist Allen Blustine, violist Maureen Gallagher, and pianist Aleck Karis—team up for Ursula Mamlock's Rhapsody and the premières of trios by George Edwards and Jason Uechi in a concert that also includes Wayne Peterson's "Peregrinations" for Solo Clarinet and two pieces by Elliott Carter: his "90+" for solo piano and his "Pastorale" for viola and piano. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. June 9 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

**KATYA GRINEVA**
The pianist performs works by Liszt, Ravel (his "Jeux d'Eau"), Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and Chopin (including his First Ballade). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 9 at 8.)

**HINDS SISTERS TRIO**
The sisters Esther, Grace, and Ruby Hinds (two sopranos and a mezzo-soprano, respectively) collaborate on a program of operatic selections and spirituals. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. June 11 at 3.)

**OMEGA ENSEMBLE**
Violinist Philip Quint and cellist Hrant Persamian join two of the ensemble's regulars—clarinettist Jean Kopperud and pianist Doris Konig—for a program that comprises Mozart's C-Major Piano Trio (K. 548), Brahms's D-Minor Violin Sonata, Poulenc's Clarinet Sonata, and two caprices by Paganini. (Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Fifth Ave. at 55th St. June 11 at 3. No tickets necessary.)

**DOWNTOWN CHAMBER & OPERA PLAYERS**
Mimi Stern-Wolfe leads works written by, or in memory of, persons who have died of AIDS. The program includes compositions by Chris deBlasio, Kevin Oldham, and Robert Savage. (Middle Collegiate Church, 50 E. 7th St. June 12 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 877-3399.)

## OUT OF TOWN

**MUSIC MOUNTAIN**
The three-hundred-and-thirty-five-seat theatre of this august institution (now beginning its seventy-first season) is a mecca for chamber-music aficionados, especially those who appreciate string quartets, which inhabit its intimate stage nearly every weekend throughout the summer. This year's opening concert features three members of the Leontovitch String Quartet—violinists Oleg and Peter Krysa and violist Boris Deviatov—plus cellist Yosif Feigelson and pianist Vladimir Feltsman in a program that comprises Schubert's Adagio and Rondo Concertante in F Major for Piano Quartet (D. 487), Victor Kissine's Piano Trio (composed in 1993), and Shostakovich's Piano Quintet. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. June 11 at 3. The season continues through Sept. 10.)

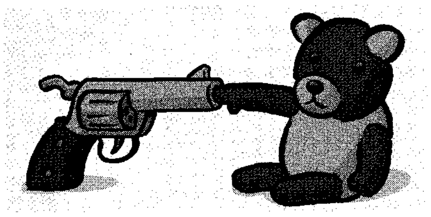
## ABOVE AND BEYOND

**READINGS**
June 7 at 8: By David Amram, Estelle Parsons, Sterling Lord, Douglas Brinkley, and others, in an evening of music and beat poetry titled "From Cairo to Kerouac." (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ June 9 at 6: By Marcela Serrano, from her novel "Antigua and My Life Before." (Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. For reservations, which are required, call 249-8950, ext. 369.) ♦ June 13 at 7: By poet Les Murray. (Russian Samovar, 256 W. 52nd St. Tickets at the door.)

**TALKS**
June 9 at 6:30: Donald P. Hansen, a professor of Ancient Middle Eastern Archeology at New York University, offers his interpretation of the art in the Royal Tombs of Ur, selections from which are on view at the Morgan Library. (29 E. 36th St. For reservations, which are required, call 685-0008, ext. 347.) ♦ June 10 at 2: Law professor Emma Jordan and history professors David W. Blight and Susan D. Pennybacker discuss lynching and American culture. (New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. 873-3400.)

## BOOK CURRENTS

*See Jane Aim. See Jane Shoot.*



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Children's literature is traditionally the preserve of sentient Teddy bears and lovable steam shovels. These days, however, it seems that even the grimmest aspects of the adult world manage to find their way into nurseries and kindergartens, and, inevitably, into kids' books, too. A curious new genre of kiddie lit has come along to help the million moms (and their naysayers) teach children the ins and outs of guns.

**GUNS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW** (Albert Whitman) is a clear, colorful, and almost surreally evenhanded approach to firearms written by Rachel Ellenberg Schulson and illustrated by Mary Jones. The book takes kids' unquenchable fascination with toy guns as its starting point, and, attempting to edify without terrifying its small-fry audience, warns gently of the perils of actual weaponry: "It is impossible to know exactly where the bullet will end up." (In this case, it lands in kitty's water bowl.) **THE STRAY BULLET** (Image Maker), by Roshni Mangal, takes a more fantastical approach to the dangers of gun violence, tracing the path of cute, shaggy Baby Bullet as she flies over a rainbow-hued landscape (rendered in folksy watercolors by Amanda Hammond) and tries desperately not to do harm: "If I land into someone / not only do I hurt or kill them . . . / but I also hurt and die, too!"

There's nothing cuddly about D. C. Dailey's stark **GUNS ARE NOT FOR FUN**, published out of Littleton, Colorado, by Brighter Horizons. Here, a street-savvy boy named Frankie offers explicit warnings about the consequences of gunplay in rhymes that evoke the rapper Ice Cube as much as Dr. Seuss: "Never ever again to play in the sand / Never ever again to lend a helping hand / Never ever again a soft puppy to feel / Just because you played with a gun that was real."

—*Mark Rozzo*

Books.

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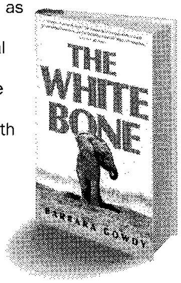
## THE WHITE BONE

by Barbara Gowdy

Set against the sprawling, arid African landscape, this moving, lyrical novel centers on the imaginative, invented world and psyche of a herd of elephants as they struggle to stay alive in a wild land wracked by drought and slaughter. A vital quest for the elusive White Bone—an object of mythic power that may lead the herd to safety and survival—takes on critical urgency as the elephants deal with the perpetual threat of extinction. (Picador)



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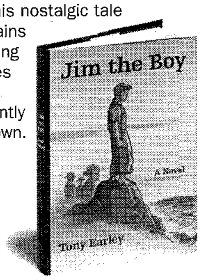
## JIM THE BOY

by Tony Earley

An illuminating portrait of a small-town boy growing up in Depression-era North Carolina, this nostalgic tale echoes America's own growing pains during a time of upheaval. As young Jim moves towards the sometimes harsh realities of adulthood, the boundaries of childhood come gently and compassionately tumbling down. (Little, Brown)



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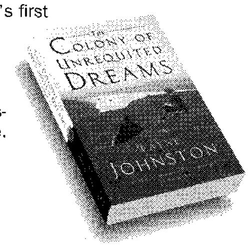
## THE COLONY OF UNREQUITED DREAMS

by Wayne Johnston

From the wilds of rural Canada to the drawing rooms of New York, this widely acclaimed novel chronicles the intermingled lives of Newfoundland's first premier, Joey Smallwood, and his soulmate and nemesis, the satirist Sheilagh Fielding. In an eloquent and unconventional epic, Johnston creates a complex world where passion and ambition meet and collide. (Anchor)



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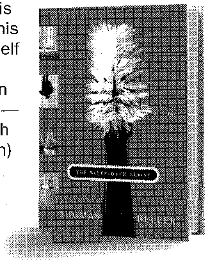
## THE SLEEP-OVER ARTIST

by Thomas Beller

Tracing his progress from a youthful delinquent hungering for a normal family life to a successful filmmaker, this narrative follows protagonist Alex Fader through the critical stages of his life, enjoying years of sleep-overs at his friends' houses and ingratiating himself into their families. Concentrating his energy on the ultimate sleep-over—an affair with a glamorous, older woman—we see a young man longing to vanish and belong at the same time. (Norton)



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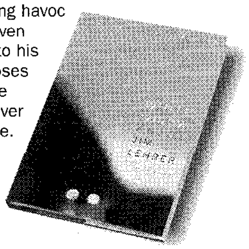
## WHITE WIDOW

by Jim Lehrer

In this haunting novel of passion and self-destruction, Jack Oliver, a happily married, small-town Texas bus driver falls madly in love with a mysterious passenger—a *White Widow* who ends up wreaking havoc on his life and dreams. Without even knowing her name, Jack gives in to his darkest desires and irrevocably loses everything he has, a few things he never had and some things he never thought about until they were gone. (PublicAffairs)



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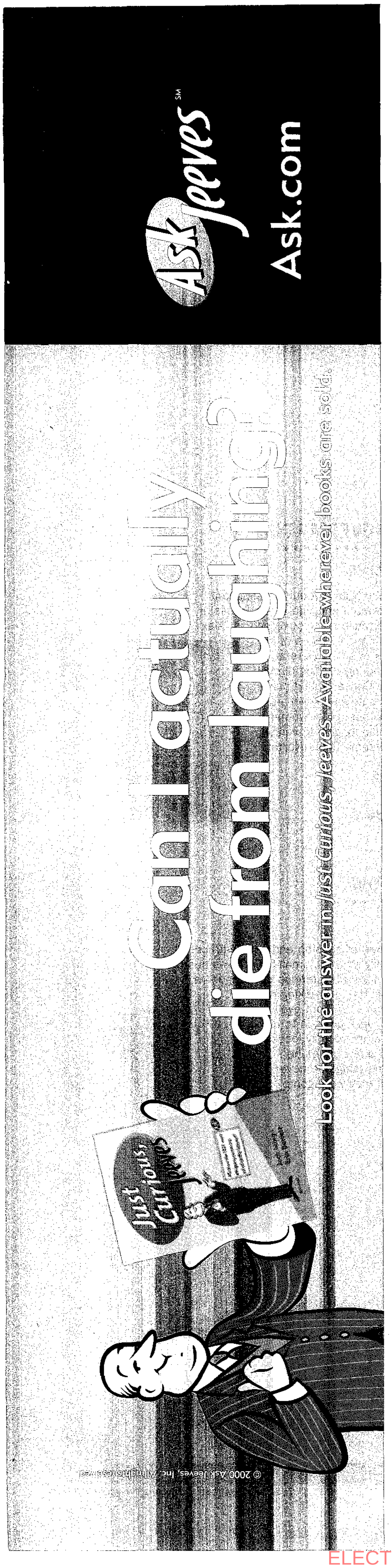

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## MOVIES OPENING

**BOOKWARS**
A documentary by Jason Rosette about Manhattan sidewalk book vendors. Opening June 9. (Cinema Village.)

**THE CHILDREN OF CHABANNES**
The sheltering of four hundred Jewish children in a French village during the Second World War is the subject of this documentary by Lisa Gossels and Dean Wetherell. Opening June 9. (Quad Cinema.)

**CINÉMA VÉRITÉ**
Peter Wintonick's ("Manufacturing Consent") documentary about the pioneers of vérité filmmaking, featuring Frederick Wiseman, Richard Leacock, and D. A. Pennebaker. Opening June 9. (The Screening Room.)

**GONE IN 60 SECONDS**
Nicolas Cage plays a legendary car thief who plots one last major heist in order to save his brother (Giovanni Ribisi) from the mob. With Delroy Lindo, Angelina Jolie, and Scott Caan. Directed by Dominic Sena. Opening June 9.

**GROOVE**
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening June 9.

**LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST**
Kenneth Branagh adapts Shakespeare again; this time it's a musical comedy in the style of Busby Berkeley. With Nathan Lane and Alicia Silverstone. Opening June 9.

**SUNSHINE**
A three-part historical epic in which Ralph Fiennes plays three different members of the same Hungarian family: a Jewish lawyer, an Olympic fencer, and an anti-Communist political activist. Directed by István Szabó. Opening June 9.

## FILM NOTES

*If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.*

**CENTER STAGE**
Depressing. The great young American Ballet Theatre star Ethan Stiefel gets trapped in a story that is shaped like a teen-prom movie. His dance sequences are worthwhile—excerpts from ballets by Balanchine and MacMilland and a slumming jazz-dance-studio episode—but he's largely seen through the eyes of young Jody Sawyer (Amanda Schull), a sweetiekins who is one of the students at the fictional American Ballet Academy. There is a great deal of earnest material here about dating and parental pressure and bulimia, and when the heroine matures she chooses the sweet guy who respects her rather than the superstar who wants to sleep with her. The movie is filled with appropriate little lessons about life and love. Written by Carol Heikkinen. Directed by Nicholas Hytner.—*David Denby* (5/29/00) (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

**CROUPIER**
A slight and streamlined bauble from British director Mike Hodges (who did "Get Carter"), about a writer (played to stony perfection by Clive Owen) who takes a job as a roulette dealer, aiming, in the process, to write a best-seller about his experiences. The plot revolves around the big chance he takes when he rescues a mysterious woman (Alex Kingston of "ER") from a life-threatening gambling debt. The lean and twisted screenplay—nobody is what he seems—gives Hodges ample time to play with doppelgängers, duplicity, and lots of mirrors. The sombre turns of the story and low-key performances are a welcome reminder that taut moviemaking (where violence erupts unchoreographed) can be as exciting as fast-paced editing and scorching pyrotechnics.—*Bruce Diones* (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

**DINOSAUR**
A fabulously expensive talking-animal movie from Disney which literalizes the art of animation out of existence. The animators took genuine footage of California, Jordan, and Australia and then placed computer-generated images of dinosaurs lumbering or fighting in the foreground of the shots. The detail in the computer images can be wonderful, but the photographed backgrounds, and the misguided need for "realism," drastically limit the fantastic play that animation is capable of: nothing happens that compares to the airborne absurdities of "Aladdin" or Tarzan's surfing through the upper branches of the forest. The story itself is regulation Disney stuff about an orphaned child—an iguanodon named Aladar (the voice of D. B. Sweeney)—who gets raised by lemurs and then joins a group of herbivores heading for a fabled nesting ground. Ossie Davis, Della Reese, Alfre Woodard, and Joan Plowright can be heard among the voices.—*D.D.* (5/29/00) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, East 86th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Union Square, and Waverly.)

**EAST IS EAST**
The great Indian actor Om Puri (from "My Son the Fanatic") plays George Khan, Pakistani patriarch and tyrant, husband of the stoical Englishwoman Ella (Linda Bassett) and father of seven children—an émigré who has settled in Manchester and who tries to impose traditional Islamic ways on his kids, most of whom are escaping into English popular culture as rapidly as they can. Puri has a big, handsome-ugly face, and he wears a moustache that gives his George a necessary touch of vanity. The playwright Ayub Khan-Din, who adapted his own stage success, has worked out a slangy, profane argot for him, and Puri's lingo joined to the sound of the family members ragging one another across the living room produces a fine, salty Brit tang. But "East Is East" is repetitive and tiresome: George brutalizes the children and his wife over and over; he's fairly stupid and often hateful—not ambiguous enough to be a tragic or even terribly interesting figure. Damien O'Donnell's direction too obviously betrays the material's roots in the commercial theater.—*D.D.* (4/24 & 5/1/00) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**FREQUENCY**
A sentimental fantasy by director Gregory Hoblit which wants to be the mother of all father-son movies. This story of an adult son (James Caviezel) who communicates via ham radio with his long-dead dad (Dennis Quaid) has all the appropriate Twilight Zone twists. When the son warns his father of his soon-to-be accidental death, Dad takes the advice and survives, and their lives change (not for the better). Hoblit's camera lingers on the actors' faces, and the aggressively emotional performances feel authentic; the film's blatant heart-tugging is earned. The plot, however, about a serial killer who eludes capture because history's been altered (and the pursuit by father and son to bring him to justice), has major-league logic flaws, even for a time-travel picture ("Time Bandits" made more sense). Still, the film moves along at an entertaining clip (thanks to Hoblit's "Hill Street Blues" experience), and there are worse things than a sappy, well-acted thriller.—*B.D.*

(East 86th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.)

**GLADIATOR**

It's been many years since movie screens clanged with Roman history; directors are rightly cautious about trying to reconcile the drama of martial valor with the sight of men in short metal skirts. In the hands of Ridley Scott, however, the Empire strikes back; his new picture is strong and stirring, almost to a fault. Russell Crowe plays Maximus, a Roman general so victorious in battle and so popular with his troops that the incoming emperor, Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix), decides within minutes to have him killed. Maximus escapes but winds up in slavery, under the rheumy eye of Proximo (the late Oliver Reed). His prowess established in the arena, our hero returns to the Coliseum to perform his final act of revenge. The simplicity of the plot feels right; whenever the movie strays into complexity—as in the dealings between Commodus and his sister (Connie Nielsen)—it founders and slows. What you want is the games, and Scott delivers them avidly, complete with unfed tigers. The emotional and political aftertaste of the film is another matter; the way in which it encourages a lust for blood and a rage for the restoration of order will not bear much examination. When in Rome, however, you might as well cheer like the Romans.—*Anthony Lane* (5/8/00) (Art Greenwich Twin, Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Ziegfeld.)

**GRASS**

A clever documentary about the government's war on marijuana which avoids the one-too-many-tokes humor that can mar such projects. Director Ron Mann footnotes his diatribe with hilarious government propaganda films that demonstrate the many shifts in official policy: weed will make you crazy, sex-crazed, heroin-addicted, lethargic, and on and on. The film's unlikely heroes are Fiorello LaGuardia, who commissioned his own study of marijuana (the results of which were suppressed by Harry J. Anslinger, the first head of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics) and Jimmy Carter, who ran for the Presidency on a pro-legalization platform. Hemp activist Woody Harrelson narrates.—*Michael Agger* (Film Forum.)

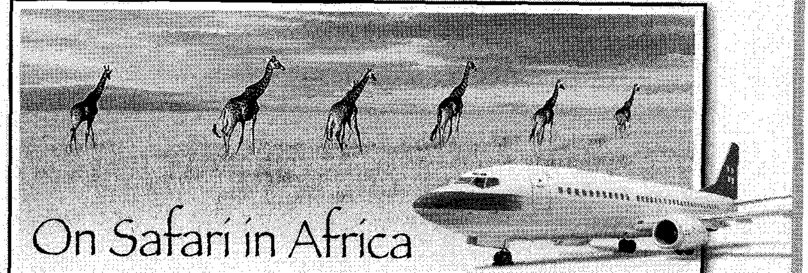
**GROOVE**

A cheerful high arrives early in Greg Harrison's ode to rave culture: a girl in a laundromat, listening to techno on her Discman, grooves to the sight of tumbling clothes in a dryer. The scene lasts only a few seconds, but it sets a playful vibe for Harrison's amiable clubland picture. The cast is fresh and appealingly amateurish; they deliver pleasant performances in what are, admittedly, cliché situations (a boy falls in love with a girl on the dance floor, another kisses a boy for the first time). What makes the film so much fun is Harrison's low-key directorial style—there's no flashy MTV editing timed to the music, just some shaggy, psychedelic club lighting and perfect rave details (the bottled water, backpacks, lollipops, and stuffed animals) that give the picture its love-in zest. The film features British d.j. John Digweed's ecstatic electronica, a blast of such sheer happiness that movie audiences should bring their own glow sticks to wave joyously in the air.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center.)

**HAMLET**

In this modern-dress version, the black towers of Times Square, fretted with neon, tessellated with ledges, balconies, and catwalks, make a sinister and eloquent setting for the power struggles within the Denmark Corporation. The bedraggled Hamlet (Ethan Hawke), a slacker in a knit cap, recites "To be or not to be" in a video store and washes Polonius's blood-soaked clothes in a laundromat. Yet this version of the world's most popular play is certainly not a travesty. Michael Almereyda, a young veteran of the New York independent scene, has developed his own form of visual poetry among the corporate settings and video screens, and many of the translations into contemporaneity are both witty and oddly right. Hawke is a depressed and adolescent Hamlet, but he doesn't cross the border into self-pity, and, in the end, the emotional power of the old play comes through. With Kyle

THE ANTIDOTE TO CROWDED PLANES



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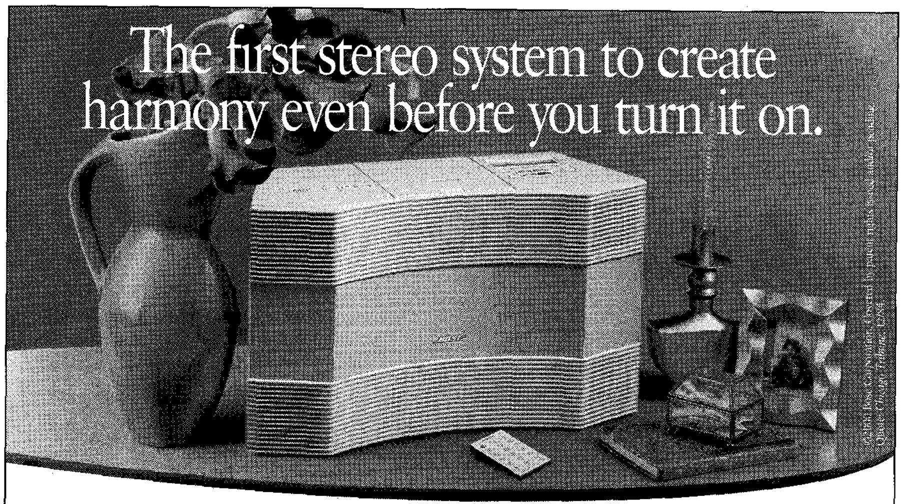
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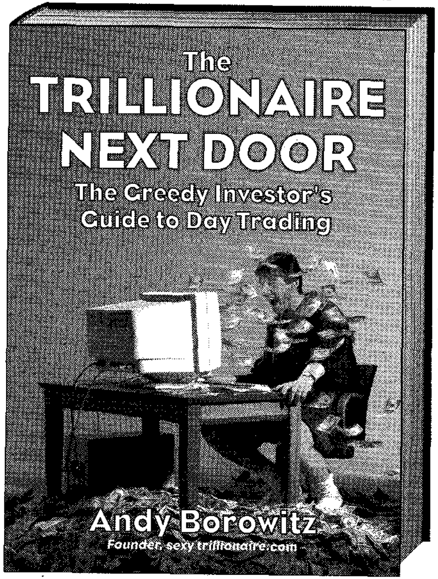
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MacLachlan as the viciously happy C.E.O., Claudius; Diane Venora, much aroused by her new husband, as Gertrude; Bill Murray as Polonius; Liev Schreiber as Laertes; Sam Shepard as the Ghost; and Julia Stiles as Ophelia, a tense Manhattan girl with a weakness for reflecting pools and waterfalls.—*D.D.* (5/15/00) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**HIGH FIDELITY**

A short, sharp movie from Stephen Frears. The source is Nick Hornby's buoyant novel, which was set in North London, but the shift to Chicago feels easy, perhaps because difficulties with girls and a penchant for listing favorite pop songs are universal symptoms of male haplessness. John Cusack stars as Rob, who runs a ratty record store called Championship Vinyl; if anything, the records are more tightly packed in his apartment, which may be why his girlfriend Laura (Iben Hjejle) has just moved out. For most of the picture, they duck and weave, unable to decide whether to stay together; not much happens, and, like Laura, you want things to move on. Yet Frears keeps jump-starting the action with fast cuts, flashbacks, and a jolting current of loud music. Why Frears made the film so dark and rain-drenched is something of a mystery; perhaps he was seeking a visual match for the glumness of perpetual adolescence. No love, the film ruefully suggests, will ever be as much fun as a good love song.—*A.L.* (4/3/00) (Criterion Center, Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

**M:I-2**

It should have been a treat. The director is John Woo, the man who took the gravity out of gunfights. The screenwriter is Robert Towne, who wrote half of the movies that made Jack Nicholson a star, and the leading lady is Thandie Newton, whose face could make a thousand ships do pretty much anything she wants. But this much-vaunted sequel to "Mission: Impossible," which hops from Australia to Spain and back again, is neither happy nor hip. It goes through the motions of the multinational action thriller, and, although those motions are as flamboyantly excessive as you would expect, the result is more gruelling than pleasurable. If the new flick has a core, it is Tom Cruise, who reprises his role as the leader of a team of spies. The sense of teamwork, however, has dropped away, and the plot—indeed, the whole movie—becomes an homage to the grim cockiness of Cruise, and, in particular, to his indestructible physique. The first film was merely incomprehensible; this one is unnecessary.—*A.L.* (6/5/00) (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

**PASSION OF MIND**

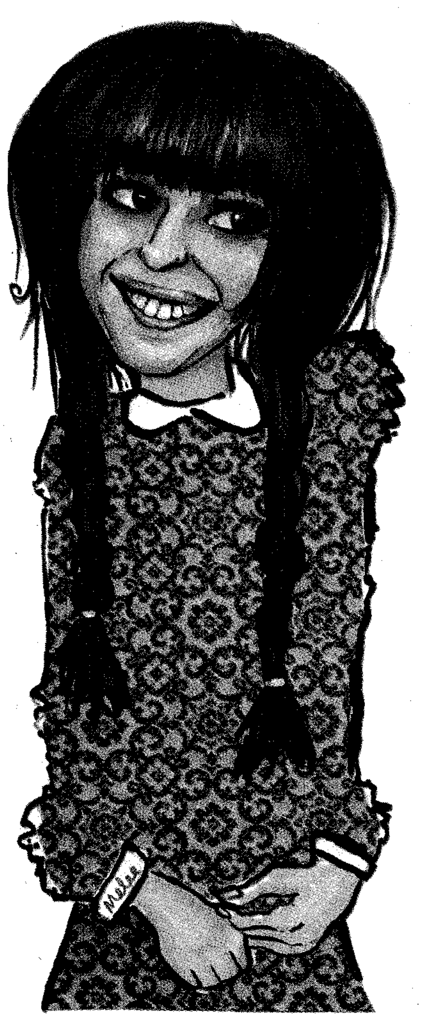
The latest who-am-I-really? drama arrives courtesy of French director Alain Berliner ("Ma Vie en Rose") and Ron Bass, who wrote the script ten years ago, when the split-identity crisis may have had a whiff of freshness. Demi Moore plays a woman with two lives, two lovers, and, not surprisingly, two shrinks. In life number one, "Marie" gambols about in floral prints in the South of France and dines in caves with an English writer (Stellan Skarsgård). In life number two, "Marty" is a driven and despairing New York literary agent falling for a mellow accountant (William Fichtner). As Marty/Marie tries to decide which life and lover is the real one, it's pleasing to discover that, as for many New Yorkers, the secret to her identity lies hidden in the clutter of her apartment.—*M.A.* (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.)

**ROAD TRIP**

College boys and girls in a series of raffish sex jokes pinned to a mere clothesline of a plot. There's an erotic prostate exam, an incriminating videotape, a sweet nerd with big ears who gets vamped by a sexually overpowering fat lady, and so on. Entertaining in a semi-contemptible way when you're watching it; immediately forgettable thereafter. With Breckin Meyer, Tom Green, Amy Smart, and DJ Qualls. Written by Todd Phillips and Scot Armstrong; directed by Phillips.—*D.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

**SHANGHAI NOON**

An extremely likable Western adventure that features the home-brewed stunts of Jackie Chan and the extemporaneous comic riffing of Owen Wilson (who borrows a lot from Dignan, the character he portrayed and co-wrote in the cult classic "Bottle Rocket"). Taking in a Jackie Chan movie is a lot like being ringside at a boxing match: the audience bobs, weaves, and shouts with every



SOMETHING ABOUT MARY

*Norman Lear's soap opera parody, "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman," was also a bona-fide soap opera, and this odd duality may explain why, despite Lear's earlier successes with "All in the Family" and "Sanford and Son," the networks passed on it. No matter: Lear sold the show to individual stations, where it spent two seasons drawing a bead on the "Me" decade, sending up everything from talk shows to consciousness seminars to Gore Vidal. Louise Lasser starred as the titular Fernwood, Ohio, housewife, obsessed with the "waxy yellow buildup" on her kitchen floor. This summer, the show's entire run will screen at the Museum of Television and Radio.*

ROBERT MELEE

punch. As a Chinese imperial guard in search of a kidnapped princess, Chan fights his way through all of the classic Western scenarios (the train robbery, the saloon, the showdown at the Spanish church), and Wilson fills the interludes with deadly earnest lectures on the fine points of the cowboy code.—*M.A.* (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.)

**SMALL TIME CROOKS**

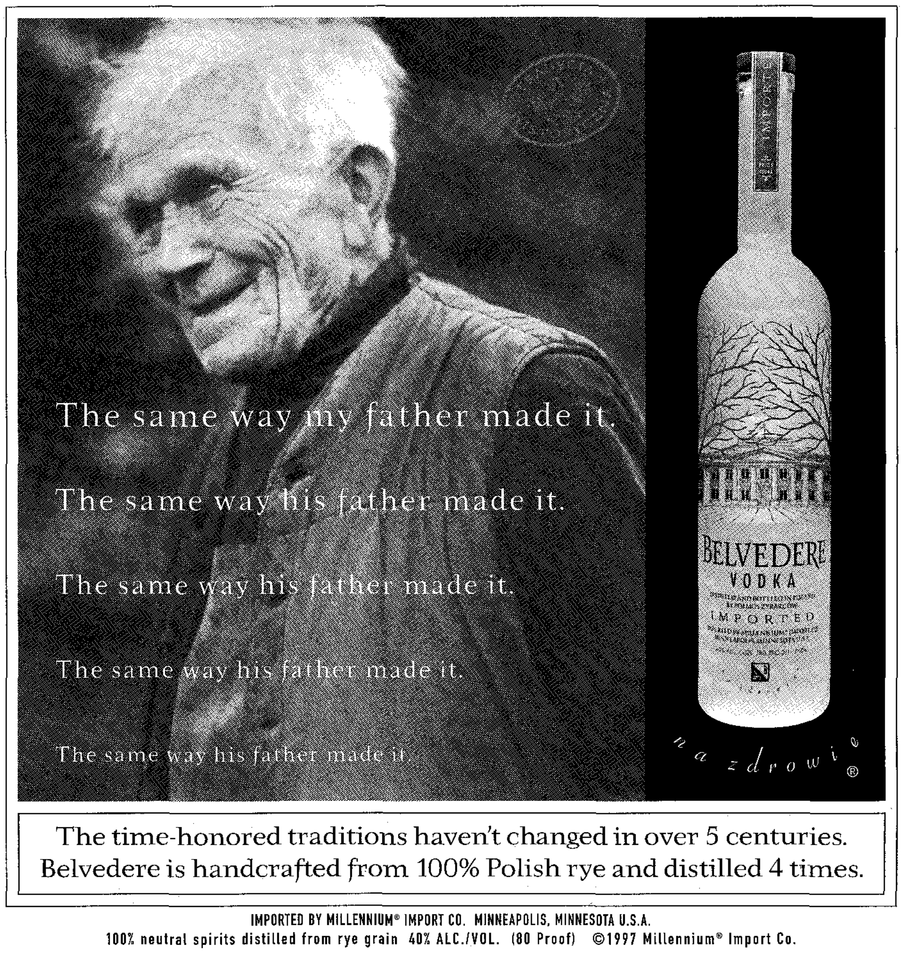
A small-time comedy from Woody Allen, who seems to have shelved, if only temporarily, his studies of anguished human souls, preferring to draw our attention to the sight of human bodies getting into nasty scrapes and even nastier suits. In the new film, Woody himself plays a useless thief who, through no talent of his own, stumbles into money; the overriding purpose of this twist is that we get to see him wearing bilious green shirts, eye-scarring indigo jackets, and sub-Versace belts studded with gold rivets. This alone is worth the price of admission. Alongside Allen are Tracey Ullman, as his loud and triumphal wife, Hugh Grant, as the smoothie who is paid to educate her, Jon Lovitz, in a delightful but underused supporting role, and Elaine May, who slips the movie into her handbag and walks away with it. Parts of the plot creak and sag a little, but the middle section, in which our heroes bust a gut trying to spend their earnings, holds wonderfully firm; in the hands of a less savvy director it would have turned into an easy laugh at the flounderings of the nouveaux riches, but Allen keeps it sweet, hinting gently that the rich of any vintage can be a drag.—*A.L.* (5/22/00) (Beekman, East 85th Street, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

**UP AT THE VILLA**

The new film by Phillip and Belinda Haas ("Angels and Insects") plays as smoothly as aged wine, but the material, adapted from a Somerset Maugham novella, substitutes worldliness for drama, and the Haases seem not to realize that there's something wrong with that. Visiting the Anglo-American expatriate community in Florence in 1938, a beautiful young English widow, Mary Panton (Kristin Scott Thomas), has to choose among three lovers: a buttoned-up-tight British aristocrat and diplomat (James Fox) who is much older than she, a young and penniless Austrian refugee (Jeremy Davies) who is given to self-dramatizing poses, and an American playboy (Sean Penn) who has a taste for danger and truly loves her. Should Mary choose comfort or excitement? This is a question that requires glamour, wit, and perhaps melodramatic excitement, not glum refinement. The Haases treat Maugham's skillfully wrought kitsch as if it were sombre moral exploration; they take the fun out of it without achieving anything serious. With Anne Bancroft in a poorly written role as a cynical American married to a fabulously wealthy Italian prince. Shot outside Siena, in a gorgeous estate doubling for a Florentine villa.—*D.D.* (5/15/00) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Waverly 1 and 2.)

**THE VIRGIN SUICIDES**

Sofia Coppola's directorial début is a seventies period piece about five blond suicidal sisters (the Lisbons) and the young men who love them. It's hard to brighten suicide, and even harder to make it funny and mysterious at the same time, and this adaptation of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel veers awkwardly between comedy and fable. Coppola concentrates mostly on re-creating the mood of the book: the fantastic intensity of adolescence, when certain girls (and the desperate acts they inspire) can acquire the status of legend. We are told of the unravelling of the sisters from the boys' perspective (Giovanni Ribisi does the narration), but the film comes most alive when it goes inside the girls' hothouse environment: the handwritten notes, purple-inked doodles, and slumber-party décor are rendered perfectly. James Woods and Kathleen Turner turn in terrifyingly accurate performances as the overprotective Catholic parents of the Lisbon clan, but the overall atmosphere doesn't seem menacing enough: is being forced to burn



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your favorite "Kiss" album really reason to end it all?—*M.A.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

## ALSO PLAYING

**THE BIG KAHUNA**
Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinema, and Union Square.
**BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE**
Chelsea West, Empire 25, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.
**BOSSA NOVA**
First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.
**EAST-WEST**
Paris.
**8 1/2 WOMEN**
BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema Village, and Empire 25.

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**THE FILTH AND THE FURY** (4/3/00)
Film Forum.
**GHOST DOG: THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI**
Angelika Film Center.
**KEEPING THE FAITH** (4/24 & 5/1/00)
Cinema 3rd Avenue, East 86th Street Cinemas, and Empire 25.
**KIKUJIRO**
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.
**TIME CODE**
Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.

## THEATRE ADDRESSES

*Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.*

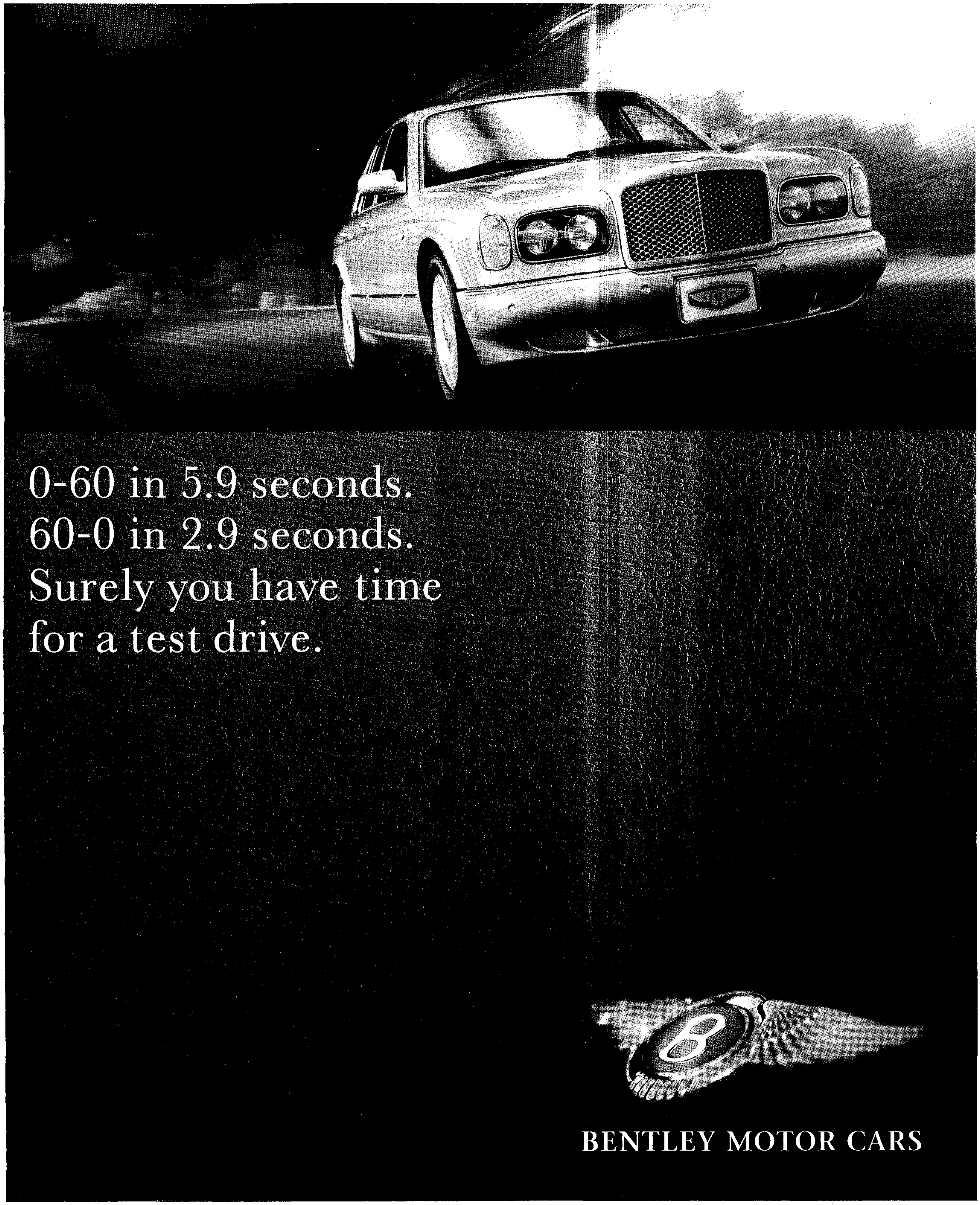
**Angelika Film Center,** 18 W. Houston St.
**Art Greenwich Twin,** Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
**Astor Plaza,** 44th St. at Broadway.
**BAM Rose Cinemas,** 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
**Beekman,** Second Ave. at 66th St.
**Chelsea Cinemas,** 260 W. 23rd St.
**Chelsea West,** 333 W. 23rd St.
**Cinema I,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema II,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema 3rd Avenue,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema Village,** 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
**Coronet Cinemas,** Third Ave. at 59th St.
**Criterion Center,** Broadway at 44th St.
**East 85th Street,** First Ave. at 85th St.
**East 86th Street Cinemas,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**Eastside Playhouse,** Third Ave. at 55th St.
**84th Street Sixplex,** Broadway at 84th St.
**Empire 25,** 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
**59th Street East Cinema,** 239 E. 59th St.
**Film Forum,** W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
**First & 62nd Cinemas,** 400 E. 62nd St.
**42nd Street E Walk,** 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
**Gotham Cinema,** Third Ave. at 58th St.
**Kips Bay Theatre,** Second Ave. at 32nd St.
**Lincoln Plaza Cinemas,** Broadway at 63rd St.
**Lincoln Square,** Broadway at 68th St.
**Metro Cinema 1 and 2,** Broadway at 99th St.
**Murray Hill Cinemas,** 160 E. 34th St.
**New York Twin,** Second Ave. at 67th St.
**19th Street East 6,** Broadway at 19th St.
**Olympia I and II,** Broadway at 107th St.
**Orpheum VII,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**Paris,** 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
**Park & 86th Street Cinemas,** 125 E. 86th St.
**Quad Cinema,** 34 W. 13th St.
**The Screening Room,** 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
**72nd Street East,** Third Ave. at 71st St.
**64th and 2nd,** Second Ave. at 64th St.
**62nd & Broadway,** 62 W. 62nd St.
**State,** Broadway at 45th St.
**Sutton 1 and 2,** Third Ave. at 57th St.
**Union Square,** Broadway at 13th St.
**Village East Cinemas,** Second Ave. at 12th St.
**Village Theatre VII,** Third Ave. at 11th St.
**Waverly 1 and 2,** Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
**Worldwide Cinemas,** 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
**Ziegfeld,** 141 W. 54th St.

## REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

*Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.*

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE**
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through June 25: The first two seasons of "The Sopranos," shown in order. June 10 at 2: "Boca" and "A Hit is a Hit." ♦ June 10 at 4:15: "Nobody Knows Anything" and "Isabella." ♦ June 11 at 2: "I Dream of Jeannie Cusamano" and "Guy Walks Into a Psychiatrist's Office." ♦ June 11 at 4:15: "Do Not Resuscitate" and "Toodle-Fucking-Oo."
**ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES**
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—June 8 at 7:30: "Simone de Beauvoir" (1982, Malka Ribowska and Josee Dayan; in French). ♦ June 9 at 7: "Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia" (1971, Sam Peckinpah). ♦ June 10 at 8: "Sartre par Lui-Même" (1976, Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat; in French). ♦ June 11 at 7: "The Getaway" (1972, Peckinpah).
**BAM ROSE CINEMAS**
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Screenings at 4:30, 7, and 9, with an additional 2 P.M. show on weekends. June 8-9: "Raising Arizona" (1987, Joel Coen). ♦ June 10: "Safe" (1995, Todd Haynes). ♦ June 11 at 2, 5:10, and 8:20: "Breaking the Waves" (1996, Lars Von Trier). ♦ June 12-13: "M*A*S*H" (1970, Robert Altman).
**FILM FORUM**
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A three-week retrospective of lesbian cult films. June 7: "Born in Flames" (1983, Lizzie Borden) and "Working Girls" (1986, Borden). ♦ June 8: "Heavenly Creatures" (1994, Peter Jackson) and "Butterfly Kiss" (1995, Michael Winterbottom). ♦ June 9: "Bound" (1996, the Wachowski Brothers) and "French Twist" (1995, Josiane Balasko). ♦ June 10: "The Killing of Sister George" (1968, Robert Aldrich). ♦ June 11: "The Fox" (1968, Mark Rydell) and "Therese and Isabelle" (1967, Radley Metzger). ♦ June 13: "Calamity Jane" (1953, David Butler) and "Queen Christina" (1933, Rouben Mamoulian). ♦ The films of Clara Bow. June 12: "Hoopla" (1933, Frank Lloyd) and "Children of Divorce" (1927, Josef von Sternberg).
**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Five films by German director Ulrike Ottinger. All films in German. June 9 at 6:30: "Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia" (1988). ♦ June 10 at 2: "The Image of Dorian Gray in the Yellow Press" (1984). ♦ June 10 at 5: "Freak Orlando" (1981). ♦ June 11 at 2: "Madame X" (1977). ♦ June 11 at 5: "Ticket of No Return" (1979).
**MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO**
25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through September 3: A complete "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman" retrospective.
**SYMPHONY SPACE**
2537 Broadway (864-1414)—Films from Africa. June 13 at 7: "Le Franc" (1994, Djibril Diop Mambéty; in Wolof). ♦ June 13 at 8: "La Genese" (1999, Oumar Sissoko; in Bambara).
**WALTER READE THEATRE**
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A weekend of films featuring Rudolf Nureyev. June 9 at 1 and June 10 at 5: "I Am a Dancer" (1972, Pierre Jourdan). ♦ June 9 at 3 and June 11 at 6:15: "Romeo and Juliet" (1965, Paul Czinner). ♦ June 9 at 6:15, June 10 at 7, and June 11 at 4: "Don Quixote" (1972, Nureyev and Robert Helpmann). ♦ June 9 at 8:30, June 10 at 9:15, and June 11 at 8:45: "Mixed Bill," filmed excerpts of Nureyev in his prime.

GREG CHRISTIE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# THE TALK OF THE TOWN

## COMMENT
## BULLETS OVER BROADWAY

If there's one thing Times Square stands in dire need of, it's wholesome entertainment for the entire family. To be sure, the Walt Disney Company—with help from the Gap, Dunkin' Donuts, and many other fine corporate citizens—has been doing its best to replace "You talkin' to *me*?" with "Have a nice day!" as the watchword of our community. But, just as Rome wasn't built in a day, not to mention Sodom and Gomorrah, you can't obliterate a century of New York sleaze without an across-the-board commitment. So all of us here at Four Times Square, the building that houses our office, were delighted to learn that the National Rifle Association is coming to the neighborhood.

The N.R.A.'s plan is for a complex along the lines of those already operated by ESPN and the World Wrestling Federation. There'll be a gift shop, selling T-shirts and ammunition belts bearing N.R.A. logos; a restaurant, where the bill of fare will include dishes made from animals killed by guns, such as deer, and animals formerly killed by guns but now slaughtered commercially, such as buffalo; and an arcade, called NRASports Blast, in which a variety of electronic games will provide what a spokesman called "an exciting total shooting-sports and sporting-goods experience."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

NRASports Blast comes not a moment too soon. Regrettably, some of the existing amusement parlors around Times Square have been perpetuating a common misconception about guns: that they are dangerous devices whose primary purpose is to kill and maim human beings. This could lead the unwary to infer a connection between the ubiquity of these devices and the number of Americans (more than thirty thousand a year) who die of gunshot wounds.

For example, at XS, a big arcade on Broadway just south of Forty-second Street, a popular attraction is DarkSilhouette (SilentScope 2), one of several games that allow you to assume the P.O.V. of an automatic-weapon-toting antiterrorist commando and blow away any number of people. Most of these people carry guns, but one, an attractive young woman, is armed with a flamethrower; if you shoot her just so, the flamethrower ignites and she falls down, twitching as she is burned alive.

DarkSilhouette (SilentScope 2) carries a warning sign—

> PENALTY
> Do not shoot innocent bystanders!
> Your life gauge will decrease
> when you shoot innocent bystanders

—that is very much in synch with the N.R.A.'s two-pronged solution to the alleged problem of gun violence. That solution combines an emphasis on voluntary education (e.g., having children watch videos in which Eddie Eagle, the organization's gun-safety mascot, admonishes them not to shoot innocent bystanders) with an enthusiasm for draconian, after-the-fact PENALTIES for crimes committed with guns. (There are plenty of electric chairs and lethal-injection gurneys around to decrease the life gauges of selected offenders.) Even so, it's doubtful that DarkSilhouette (SilentScope 2) will end up as part of the total shooting experience. The N.R.A. has been vague about anything beyond "virtual-reality skeet shooting," but games that involve the killing or wounding of people will certainly not be permitted. Woodland animals may or may not be another story. Perhaps there will be machines like the one described in a Boston *Globe* dispatch from a recent N.R.A. meeting as a "video duck-shooting game, complete with animated blood splatters," but perhaps not. It's bad enough that the sidewalk outside the arcade will be a perpetual rally site for gun-control busybodies without getting the animal-rights nuts all worked up, too.

Only two games that would be inarguably suitable for NRASports Blast could be found during a recent lunch-hour tour of the area. Both were in the Broadway City Arcade, a new place on Forty-second near Eighth Avenue. In Big Mouth 2000, you shoot Ping Pong-size balls into a grinning clown's mouth, trying to knock his teeth down. In Quick & Crash, you fire pulses of light at little bull's-eye targets, and if you hit enough of them you get to shoot at a real-looking coffee mug, and if your aim is true the coffee mug flies to pieces.

This is the sort of thing, one may assume, that will be on offer at the new facility. Its sponsors, when not in gulling-the-tourists mode, don't mind signalling that the ultimate reason they favor the proliferation of unlicensed, unregistered firearms is to facilitate the overthrow of the government by force and violence, should incursions on the Second Amendment reach intolerable levels. Such candor, though, has been deemed unwise for the family trade. Guns don't kill people, people shatter coffee mugs, is the notion. Squeamishness, in fact, is the key to the reverse propaganda that NRASports Blast will inadvertently promulgate. Like a stripper's G-string, it will succeed mainly in calling attention to what is being covered up. Willkommen, bienvenue, welcome!

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

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## THE MUSICAL LIFE
## KEITH'S DREAM

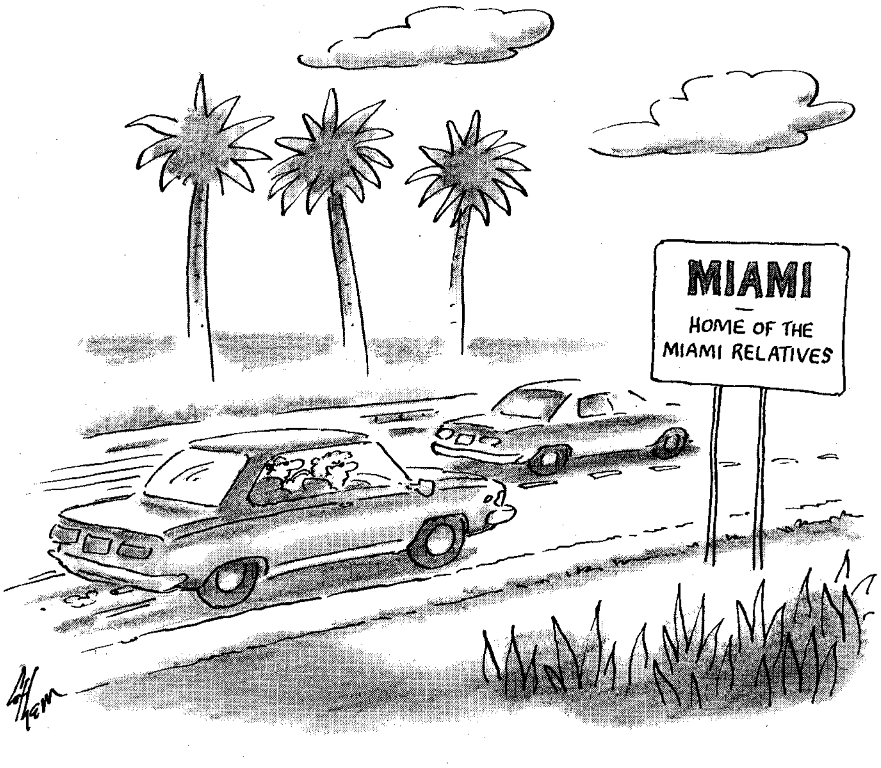
The Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," originally recorded in 1965, is having a great year. It was voted the best rock song ever in a recent VH1 poll of music-industry insiders, nosing out "Stairway to Heaven" and "Respect." This summer, two new interpretations of the song can be heard, one by the tortured rock chanteuse Cat Power and the other by the pop princess Britney Spears. That any thirty-five-year-old pop song and the band that produced it are still in circulation is amazing, and that this particular song can be stretched to accommodate two such different talents as Cat Power and Britney Spears is a measure of the remarkable elasticity of its appeal.

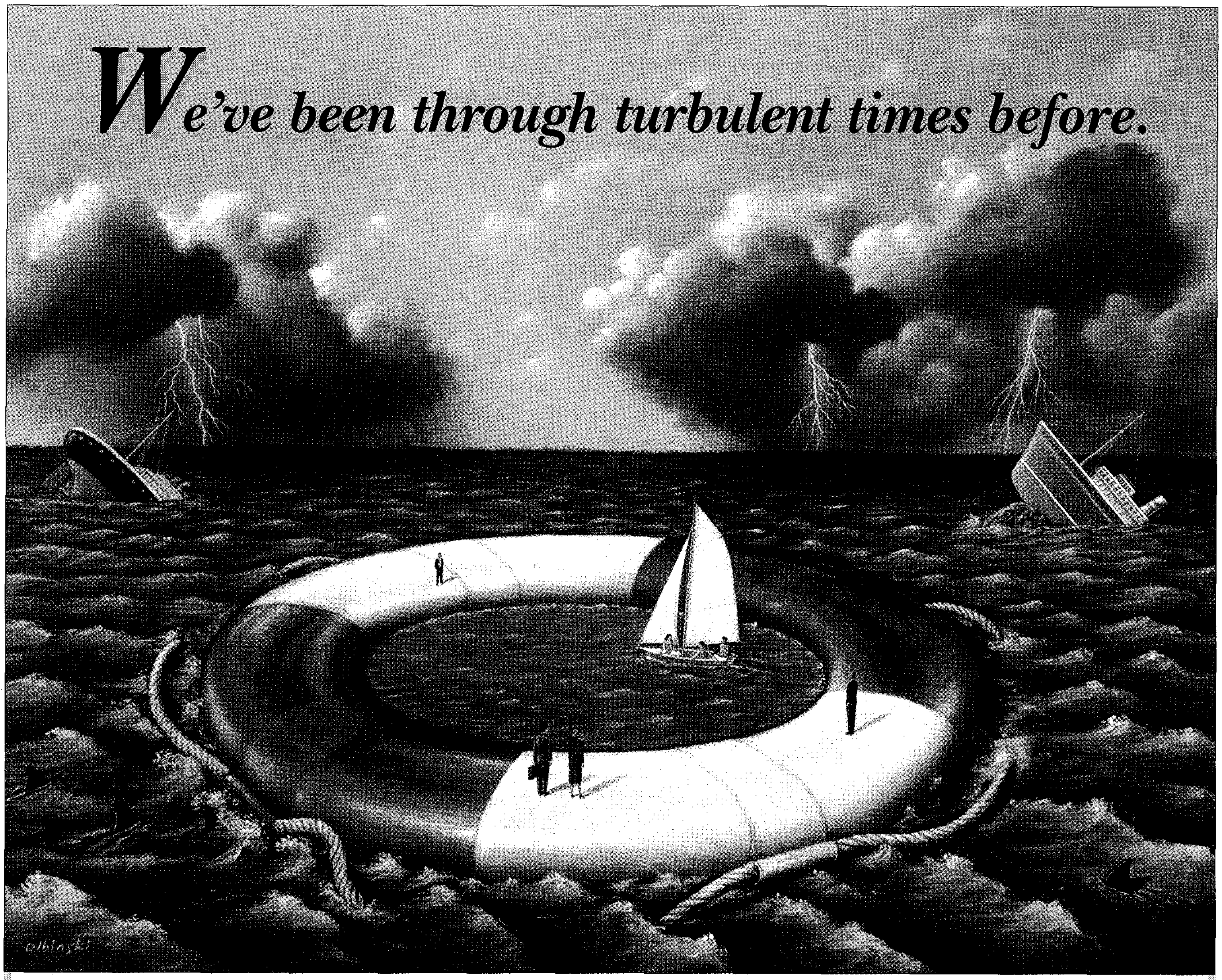
The origins of "Satisfaction" are appropriately Romantic—it is the "Kubla Khan" of pop tunes. According to one legend about the song, in 1965 Keith Richards, the Stones' lead guitarist, woke up in the middle of the night in a hotel room in Florida with the song's famous riff—dunt dunt, da-da-*da*—ringing in his head. Richards, who was in the habit of keeping a tape recorder beside his bed to capture such moments, grabbed a guitar and taped the riff, then fell asleep again, leaving the machine running. In the morning, he forgot about the incident, and later, listening to the tape, he thought it was blank and was about to record over it when he stumbled on the riff and quickly figured out the rest of the song.

The lyrics, especially the lines about commercially manufactured desire—"When I'm watching my TV / And a man comes on and tells me / How white my shirts can be"—made this song seem far more knowing than the usual pop fare. "Satisfaction" became the Stones' first No. 1 single in the United States, and it helped launch the golden age of rock, when pop hits were more than just pretty, forgettable jingles sung by bland but telegenic performers. So it seems almost cruel that the new Britney Spears album, "Oops! . . . I Did It Again"—which sold 1.3 million units in its first week of release, the third-best début ever—contains a cover of "Satisfaction." Wait, isn't Britney Spears what the Stones' "Satisfaction" was all about?

Britney starts out coy, then gets gutturally sexual, then returns to innocence again—her standard routine. Her version is mostly chorus: "I can't get no satisfaction" repeated over and over, and set to a Janet Jacksonesque Eurodisco beat. She changes the "how white my shirts" line to "how tight my skirts should be"—making the song a response to those who disapprove of her provocative, baby-girl style.

Cat Power's version of "Satisfaction," which is on her new release, "The Covers Record," leaves out the chorus and the main riff altogether. Chan Marshall, the twenty-eight-year-old Southerner who calls herself Cat Power, is a famous figure in the highbrow rock world, known as much for her piercingly beautiful performances as for her self-defeating behavior onstage. Instead of making the most of her assets, as the spunky Britney does, Cat Power seems driven to do


MIAMI
HOME OF THE MIAMI RELATIVES



# We've been through turbulent times before.

Regardless of today's market climate, the future includes the distinct possibility of uncertainty and volatility. Not surprisingly, many investors feel adrift, unsure where to turn for advice. Should you invest more in bonds or equities? More in small caps or blue chips? Or keep more cash on hand? While nobody can promise you all the right answers, U.S. Trust can promise you something invaluable: expertise based on experience.

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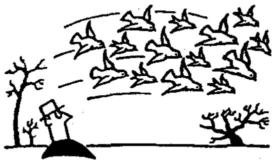
just the opposite: she plays entire shows with her hair hiding her face, and annoys the audience and her band by stopping in the middle of songs. For stretches, though, she's brilliant.

At a recent Cat Power appearance at the Knitting Factory, in Tribeca, a packed house of devoted fans stood rapt as Marshall sang her version of "Satisfaction." The silences where the chorus had been were haunting—at her best, Marshall is a pop Erik Satie. (One rube who dared to whisper "Where's the chorus?" was immediately shushed by the faithful.) At the end of "Satisfaction," there is a line—" 'Cause you see I'm on a losing streak"—that is hard to hear in the Stones' version, but Cat Power made it the emotional climax of the song. It was weird, but it sounded great, and seemed to capture the spirit of the original, which is whatever it was that Keith Richards dreamed.

—*John Seabrook*

## LOOKING UP
## BIRDS OF AMERICA MAKE A MANHATTAN PIT STOP



One of the good things about being an ornithologist is that you can flog your new book by taking people on bird walks. David Allen Sibley, the author of the forthcoming "National Audubon Society Sibley Guide to Birds," which Knopf is promoting as the state-of-the-art bird bible for our time ("First, there was John James Audubon. Then came Roger Tory Peterson. And this fall . . ."), led fifteen birders (some experienced, some newly hatched) on a recent ramble through the Ramble in Central Park, at the peak of the spring season for migrating warblers and other out-of-town visitors. It was a cool morning, with a gray, heavy sky, but the endless drizzle was holding off for once. Ten steps up the path from a parking lot, Sibley paused, looked up, and pointed out a pair of Baltimore orioles in a tree. "That's the male, with the black head," he said, "and the female is off to his right, on the outer branch. It's probably taken them three to four weeks to get here from Central America, and they may go on another few hundred miles. They're looking through the trees for caterpillars."

Sibley is a quietly imperturbable young man of thirty-eight, with a reserved manner and a non-didactic way of speaking. He had on jeans, and a nubbly green windbreaker with flashes of purple at the nape. His little flock wore regulation urban drab, black jeans or khakis, except for two business types in dark suits. The only one without binoculars was a slim young woman in a chill-defying white T-shirt, who didn't seem to need them. "We're hearing a lot of birds singing," Sibley observed. "This time of year, the males are trying to attract mates and establish territories. Most warblers have two different types of song, one that they use when communicating with other males, defending their territory, and one that they use to communicate with females, saying 'I'm available.' The male struts around and does his thing, but the female makes the choice."

The group walked deeper into the woods. A pair of gray-shirted joggers passed by, with mud-streaked ankles. "We're hearing several different species of warblers," Sibley noted. "Central Park draws migrating birds that are moving north, flying at night. When the sun comes up and they're over the city, this is the only place they can land. It's like an island that draws birds in from miles and miles."

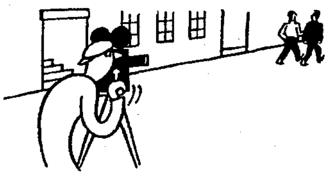
Sibley, the son of a professional ornithologist, has been watching and drawing birds since he was seven. He learned to draw by tracing the illustrations in Arthur Singer's "Birds of the World," but soon moved on to freehand drawing from his own observations. "I started thinking of doing a field guide when I was about twelve," he said, "but I didn't start working on it seriously until 1988, when I was twenty-seven." His magnum opus will have more information and many more illustrations than any previous guide; there are in excess of six thousand six hundred drawings; and the texts, also by Sibley, are laid out around the pictures as captions, so you don't have to skip back and forth to learn about plumage, voice, range, habitat, and so forth. "There's an oven bird—that little olive-colored bird to the right of the lamppost," Sibley noted. "They spend all their time on the ground, and build a nest that's shaped like an oven."

During the next fifty minutes, Sibley identified sixteen more species, some by voice only. They were the American robin; bluejay; black-and-white warbler; black-throated blue warbler ("that buzzy song that rises at the end"); cardinal; magnolia warbler ("very yellow, with really bold black stripes on the sides of the breast"); Canada warbler ("plain gray on the back, bright yellow underneath, with a necklace of black streaks and a long tail that flicks around"); red-bellied woodpecker; house sparrow; veery ("one of the longest-distance migrants"); rose-breasted grosbeak; red-eyed vireo; starling; grackle (chasing the starling); white-throated sparrow; and northern water thrush. The tiny magnolia warblers were especially numerous. "You could come back tomorrow and it would be the American redstart instead," Sibley said. "Species change with the migration overnight. They'll take off after sunset tonight and fly on, and another group will come in from the south."

A fine-looking female in a dark-green rain jacket asked him, if he were a bird, what species he'd want to be. "I've answered that question in different ways," he said, after a longish pause. "But I think, really, in spite of the name, I'd choose something like the brown booby. They live in the Caribbean. They're great flyers—they look like they have a good time flying. And they eat fish. There's plenty of food, it's always warm, not much to worry about, and they live for twenty to twenty-five years. These warblers live only five years or so—they have to migrate thousands of miles twice a year, and they eat worms. If I could handle being called a brown booby, it would be a pretty good life."

—*Calvin Tomkins*

## THE PICTURES
## NAKED AND TRUTHFUL IN THE BRONX



The makers of the movie "Finding Forrester"—Opus No. 65 for Sean Connery, who is co-starring with a sixteen-year-old newcomer named Rob Brown—were messing with the South

Bronx the other night. They were filming scenes that featured Brown, a local six-foot-tall basketball-playing eleventh grader, interacting with Connery and assorted neighborhood folks, including the rapper Busta Rhymes. A few years before Brown was cast in the film, he was relocated from an inner-city public school and placed, on scholarship, in a prestigious private school. Last February, when he was cast in "Finding Forrester," he had no manager, no agent, and had never before acted in anything. "There's an inner peace about him—he's a most unflappable fellow," one of "Finding Forrester" 's several producers said. "And we're doing everything not to shake his confidence, everything to keep him concentrated."

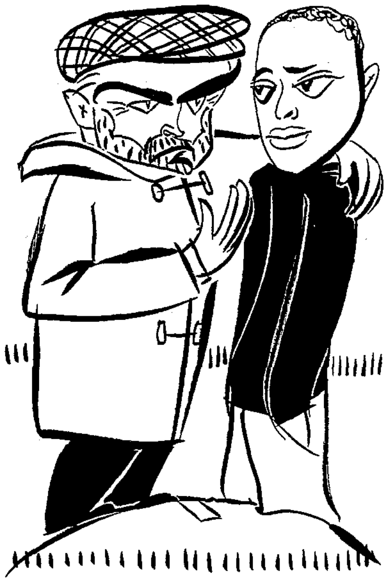
The movie is about the unlikely friendship between Forrester (Connery), a cranky, hard-drinking, withdrawn-by-choice, basketball-loving writer who mysteriously seems to have stopped writing, and Jamal (Brown), a high-school basketball player who has been relocated to a prestigious private school and who secretly wants to be a writer. Jamal goes to Forrester for literary help, and he tries to draw the older man out of his isolation. Busta Rhymes, who had his own trailer on the set, and his own hair stylist to do his dreadlocks, plays Jamal's older brother, Terrell.

Russell Smith, the movie's handsome twenty-five-year-old basketball consultant, said, "Rob knows how to play, but I'm teaching him some aggressive things, some moves, and elbowing, shoving, things like that. I didn't have to teach him things like the Hood. It's the handshake with three stages—clasp with thumb up, regular shake, then clasp fingers."

At the location—on the stairs of the elevated subway platform at 167th Street and River Avenue—the life of the neighborhood was going on as usual, amid screaming sirens, thundering trains overhead, yelling residents, and tantalizing aromas drifting over from a nearby Cuban deli. The director, Gus Van Sant, worked with his cinematographer on the camera's placement and with the electricians on the lighting. Neighborhood kids kept begging, "Gus, put me in the movie, please, Gus!"

Everybody on the set seemed to be supremely mindful of the danger of disturbing Rob Brown's calm. "If anybody shows panic, everybody feels it," a young production assistant whispered solemnly.

"Rob originally answered an ad for an open-audition call," said a producer, munching on a juicy Cuban sandwich. "When he walked into our office, we liked the way he said his name: 'Rob Brown.' Just like that. That was it." After casting Brown, who usually lives at his school, the producers placed him in the custody of an acting coach, with whom he is sharing an apartment while he shoots the movie.



*Sean Connery and Rob Brown*

Another producer, savoring a fried plantain from the deli, said, "On Rob's first day of shooting with Sean, Sean said to him, 'Did you have any trouble sleeping last night?' This kid just looked puzzled and said, 'No.' Can you believe? Only that—'No.'"

Connery is larger in life than 007. Waiting in his trailer to be summoned to the set, he entertained a couple of friends by recounting his visit, that day, to his four-year-old granddaughter's nursery school, in midtown. "It's like no school I ever saw—you should see this school!" he said, in an overpowering Scottish accent. "All the equipment! All the paints! Buckets of brushes! Every damn thing you could imagine! And they cook and they bake and they wear these little aprons and chef's hats!" He laughed joyously and did an excellent impersonation of four-year-old cooks and bakers.

Then he was called to duty. He put on a tan duffel coat and a matching cap—quickly all business and no nonsense—and strode with serious purpose to the set. Rob Brown, escorted by a couple of solicitous P.A.s, followed. He wore black Nike Air Jordan sneakers, fashionably baggy jeans, a hooded black sweatshirt, and an alpaca Tibetan hat with ear flaps and fake yak fur. Brown coolly propelled himself forward in a floppy lope, arms swinging. He looked around with mild interest.

Both actors—attending the routine shouts of "Stand by!" "Here we go!" "Roll sound!"—plunged into action and worked for several hours doing scenes on the train steps, on the platform, and inside Yankee Stadium. In the stadium, standing alone together on the pitcher's mound, they did what Barry Papick, Brown's acting coach, said was the "cathartic" scene of the movie.

"The scene is all about loss, so I tried to get Rob down to his own loss," he said. "I follow the Lee Strasberg method: Sense memory! Get to the bottom! Find the real emotion! The rediscovery-of-emotion thing! Like Brando! Rob is fearless. In front of the camera, he's naked and truthful."

After the shot, Gus Van Sant, who had rehearsed the actors quietly and briefly, with minimal suggestions, told them the scene was "perfect," and they looked happy. A few minutes later, he talked to some friends about what had prompted him to make "Finding Forrester."

"This is almost a sister project to 'Good Will Hunting,' " Van Sant said. "This is mainstream, but good. You can get top dollar for this. Today, it's all about overhead."

"It's tough to disguise hard work and preparation, but it pays off," Connery said.

"This movie is a mixture of the old and the new," one of the producers said. "That's what the movie is about."

At about 4:30 A.M., when the shooting was done, Brown hung around on the set with Russell Smith and Busta Rhymes and Barry Papick and some of the local kids who were playing his friends. They did a lot of gleeful elbowing and carefree shoving and, fearless and naked and truthful, they gave each other the Hood.

—*Lillian Ross*

# THE FINANCIAL PAGE

## WHERE DO DOT-COMS GO WHEN THEY DIE?

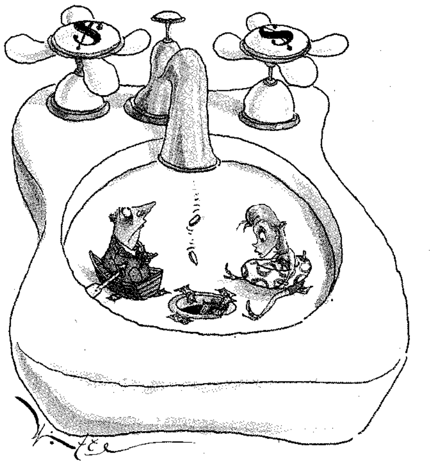
If you drive south of Pittsburgh, up the Monongahela River, you'll see town after town where the one memorable feature is an old steel mill. Its gates will be locked, its windows broken, but the sheer size of it will remain staggering. You'll find the same driving through Gary, Indiana, or Youngstown, Ohio. The mills are monuments to a now vanished industry—vast and trunkless legs of stone. Somehow, defunct Web sites don't send the same shiver down your spine. It's too bad, because soon the Internet's going to be littered with them.

The dot-com shakeout really got going in May, prompted by a sharp downturn in the Nasdaq and by some dazzling mismanagement. "The environment has changed a hundred and eighty degrees," the Merrill Lynch analyst Henry Blodget says. "Six months ago, your biggest problem if you were an E-commerce startup was to avoid being drowned in the money that was being thrown at you. Today, it's persuading your investors to give you that extra twenty million you need not to go under."

The most prominent failures have been those of the British on-line retailer Boo.com and the would-be Internet television pioneer DEN. Boo spent close to a hundred and thirty-five million dollars in an effort to sell sportswear to urban hipsters, brushing aside the fact that not a whole lot of people want to order Donna Karan sneakers on-line. The company was run by the Swedish entrepreneur Ernst Malmsten ("We have been *too* visionary") and the former model Kajsa Leander ("Even when I was parading down the catwalk at Milan Fashion Week, I knew that in a few years I'd be doing something else"). The result was the most expensive multimedia art project in history, and it ended in a fire sale, last week, of Boo's assets.

DEN, meanwhile, managed to burn through nearly sixty million dollars while taking in virtually no revenue. This would not surprise you if you saw any of its programming, but you didn't. You missed "Fear of a Punk Planet," a bizarre Andy Hardy-meets-Johnny Rotten show in which four punks band together to keep their favorite club open, and "Redemption High," an Aaron Spelling-style drama about Christian teen-agers who ask, in each episode, "What would Jesus do?" DEN also had to deal with a sex scandal, a constantly shifting business plan, and a president who, one former employee recently said, "in a just world would never work again."

The failures of Boo and DEN were predictable. What's surprising is that their comeuppance created panic in the business world, spawning headlines like "BOO'S DOWNFALL SENDS SHIVER THROUGH MARKET." Last week, a British central banker actually felt compelled to state that Boo's failure did not mean that the Internet wasn't a viable place to do business. Well, yes, and the end of "Snoops" does not mean that network television is doomed. Apparently, shakeouts can be long-awaited and still come as a shock.



Better get used to it. Blodget says that three-quarters of current E-tailers will eventually disappear, through either collapse or consolidation. Even reputable businesses have started folding; there have been obits recently for the toy sellers Toysmart and Redrocket.com, and for the comparison-shopping site Brandwise.com. But this is what's supposed to happen. Capitalism's sorting-out process is necessarily messy because it happily funds companies with utterly uncertain futures, most of which will fall well short of their own expectations. If the future were certain, we wouldn't need markets. And it's the "perennial gale of creative destruction" that Joseph Schumpeter commended, not the "perennial gale of creative creation."

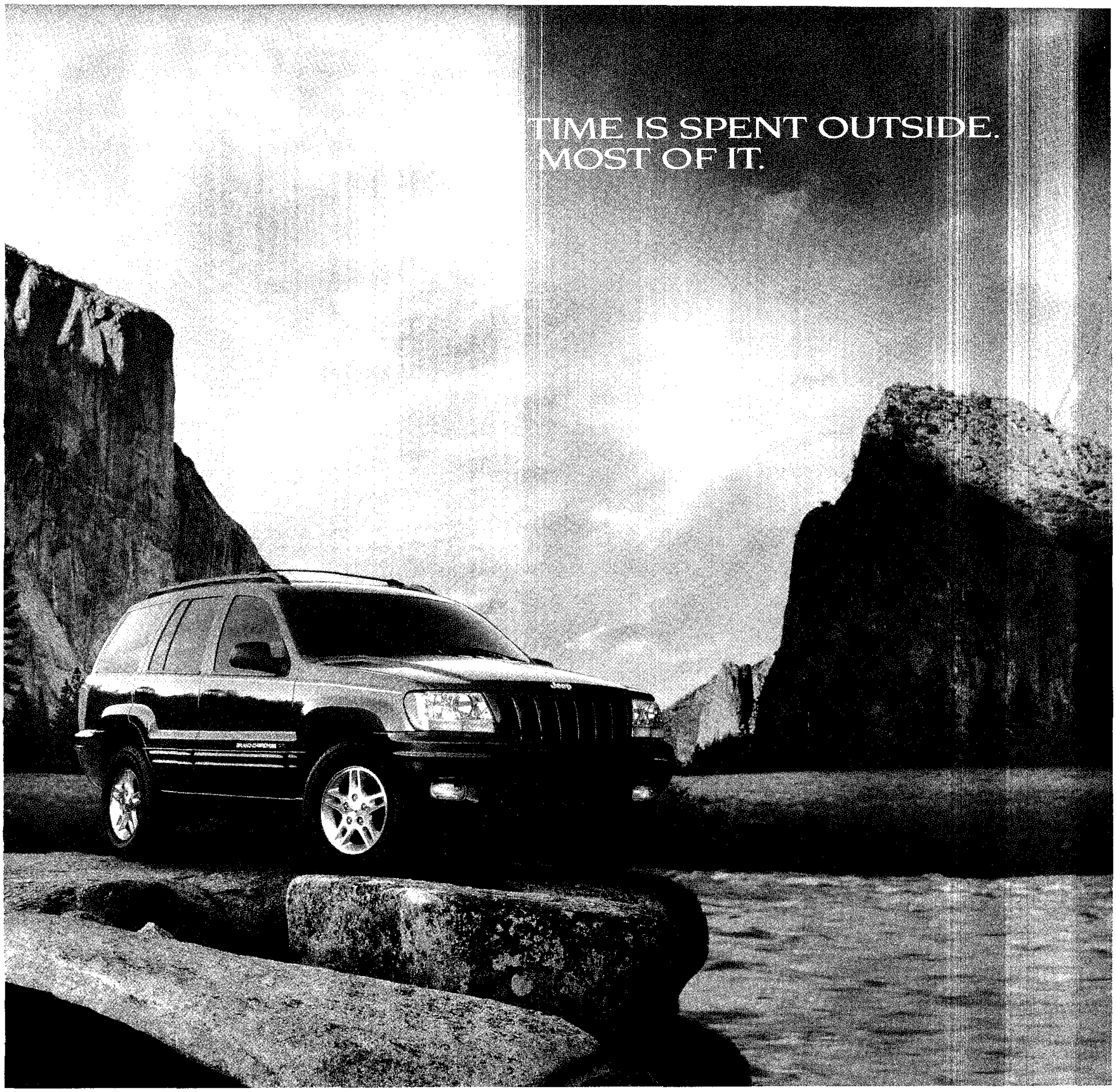
Failure is the American way. In the first decade of the American auto industry, after all, three hundred and forty-six different companies went out of business or were acquired by competitors. (That's why nobody drives around in a Rainier sedan or a Dragon with a rumble seat.) Buick, Cadillac, and Chevrolet were all independent companies before merging with General Motors. And the early years of other new industries—like biotech and personal computing, in the eighties—left a similar trail of victims. The main difference is that dead dot-coms leave almost nothing behind: no factories, little salable technology—hardly anything but a URL and a pile of pizza boxes. The engineers have generally moved on to more scenic pastures, and though there is the brand name, the spectacle of bankruptcy is likely to have dimmed its lustre. You sink zillions into these firms, and—poof!—it's as if they had never existed.

All this heightens the suspicions of those who think that Internet businesses are somehow unreal. In fact, it would be reason to worry if these companies *had* left behind a lot of assets. You do business on the Internet precisely because it allows you to prosper without having to carry huge amounts of inventory or invest billions in factories and stores. Companies that use the Internet well—like Amazon.com and Dell Computer—get much more revenue for every dollar they invest than their off-line counterparts do. This is the bearable lightness of E-commerce.

Anyway, we don't want entrepreneurs to run their businesses with an eye to what will be left for the vultures if they fail. We want entrepreneurs to be a little foolhardy, because the odds of success are slim. They've got to believe that somehow they will storm the hill, seize the beachhead. And when they fail we want them to be all out of ammo. Because in the end no one bought those steel factories in Gary or in Homestead, grand and glorious as they are. The rules are the same for new economy and old. It's what a company lives for, not what it dies with, that counts.

—*James Surowiecki*

MICHAEL WITTE



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# CLASSIC THEATRE COMES HOME AT LAST

## ROUNDABOUTTHEATRECOMPANY

### 2000-01 SEASON

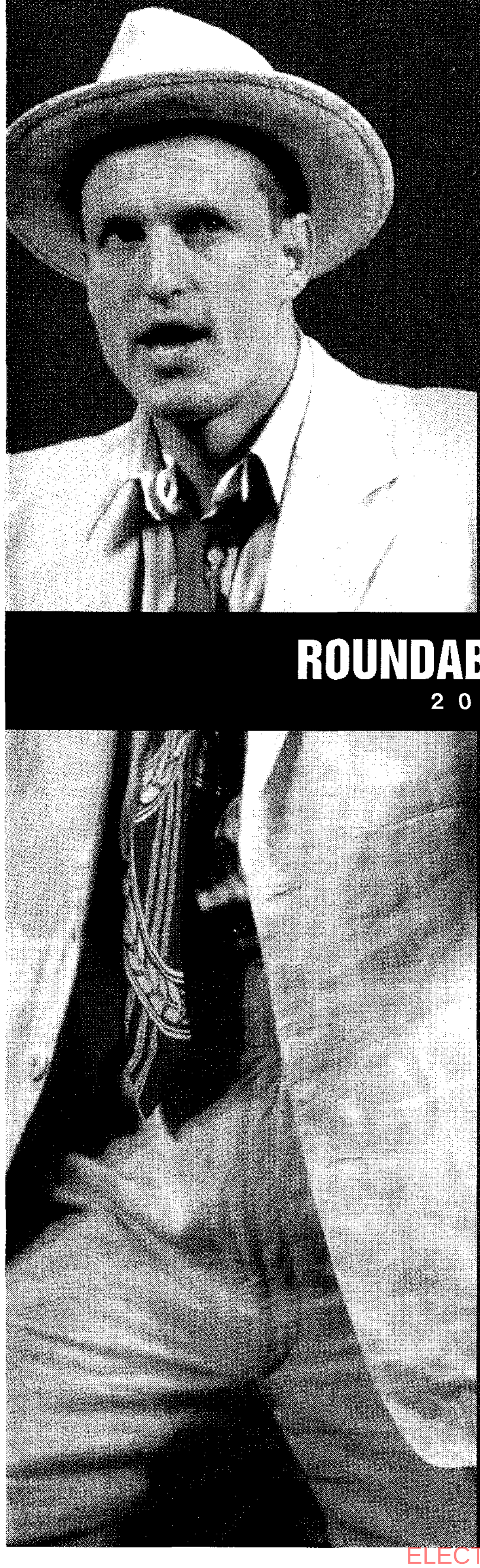
**ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY,** New York's premier classic theatre company, has finally found a home—a home that will ensure that the classics have a permanent place in the heart of Times Square.

**AT THE CROSSROADS OF CULTURE** and commerce, Roundabout's new theatre on 42nd Street—christened the American Airlines Theatre in honor of Roundabout's major corporate partner—will provide a haven for quality, classical theatre for New Yorkers and visitors alike.

Layers of paint, painstakingly removed, have revealed a number of Italian Renaissance-style murals that flank the new American Airlines Theatre's proscenium.

Top: Derek Jacobi and Laura Linney in *Uncle Vanya*

# A NEW CHAPTER IN A DISTINGUISHED HISTORY



**ROUNDABOUT HAS BUILT** its unparalleled reputation by staging acclaimed revivals of *Cabaret, A View From the Bridge, 1776, Anna Christie, She Loves Me, Joe Egg,* and many more. Through it all, Roundabout has moved from theatre to theatre and neighborhood to neighborhood as it brought this AWARD-WINNING fare to millions of theatregoers. During its wanderings, the company has grown to serve one of the largest subscription audiences in the country and has become the nation's largest nonprofit theatre company.

## ROUNDABOUTTHEATRECOMPANY

### 2000-01 SEASON

**ROUNDABOUT'S ROSTER** of directors, designers, and actors reads like a *Who's Who* of American theatre. It includes Jayne Atkinson, Blair Brown, Stockard Channing, Alan Cumming, Scott Ellis, Laurence Fishburne, Calista Flockhart, Julie Harris, Holly Hunter, Amy Irving, Derek Jacobi, Cherry Jones, Swoosie Kurtz, Nathan Lane, Anthony LaPaglia, David Leveaux, Laura Linney, Joe Mantello, Rob Marshall, Michael Mayer, Sam Mendes, Helen Mirren, Liam Neeson, Christopher Plummer, Roger Rees, Natasha Richardson, Ron Rifkin, Jason Robards, Martin Short, Tony Walton, and Jerry Zaks.

Woody Harrelson in *The Rainmaker.*

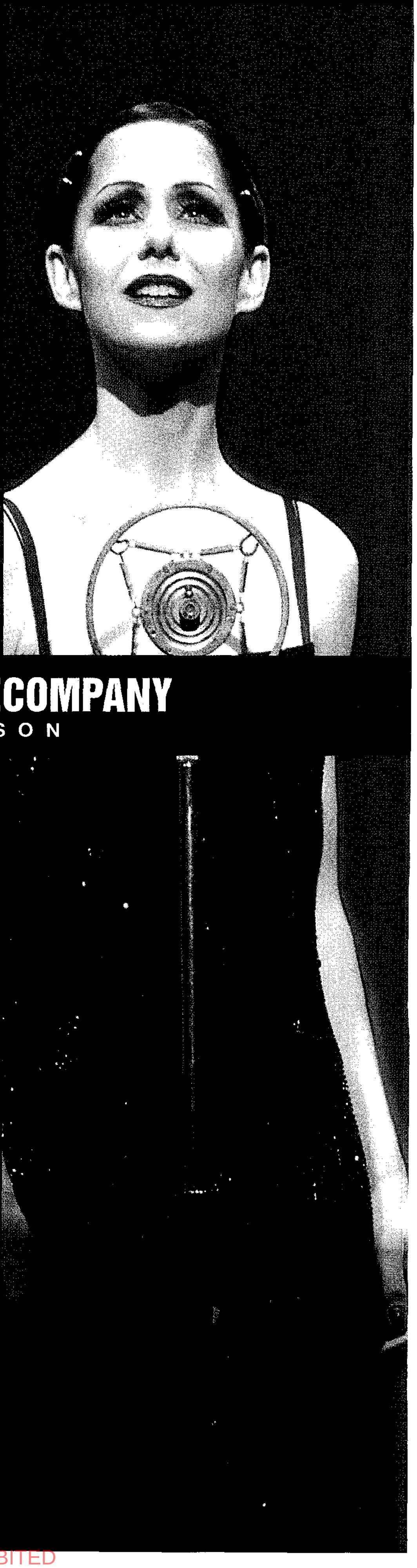
**FROM CARNEGIE HALL** to the Metropolitan *Museum of Art*, every major cultural institution is associated with a physical facility that complements its mission and is inseparable from its HIGH LEVEL OF ARTISTRY. The move to 42nd Street in the 1999-2000 season links Roundabout's artistic program to a classic performance facility, and confirms Roundabout Theatre Company's place in the ranks of New York's major arts institutions.

# ROUNDABOUTTHEATRECOMPANY

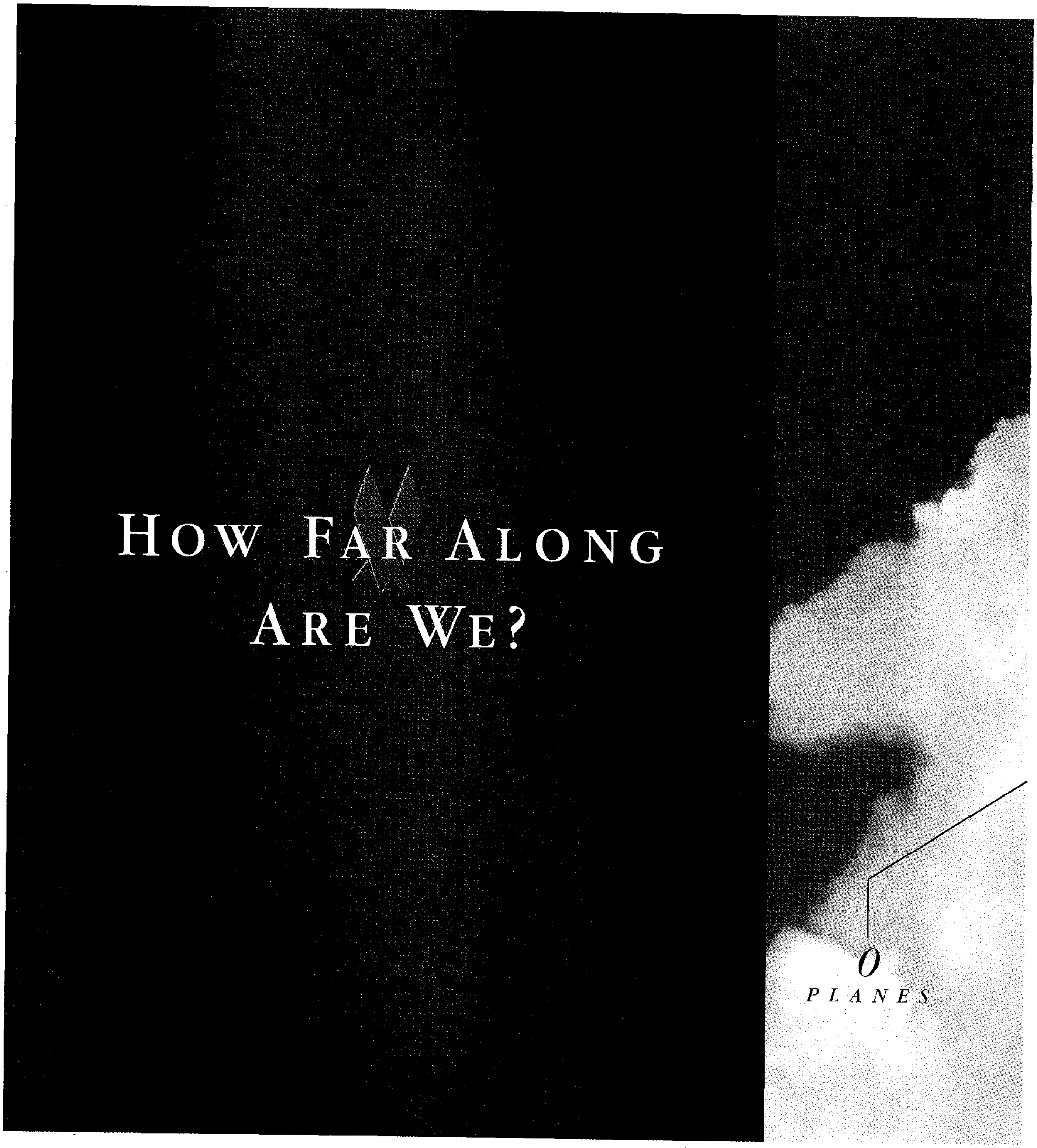
## 2000-01 SEASON

**FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS** underneath a supermarket in the nineteen-sixties, Roundabout has grown into one of the city's—indeed, the nation's—premier nonprofit theatres. Now at last it will have a physical building that reflects the EXCELLENCE which its audiences have come to expect from its productions.

**IN THE WORDS OF** Artistic Director Todd Haimes: "Our new home will be one of the most extraordinary theatres in New York City, and Roundabout's single most valuable asset for the next eighty years."



Susan Egan in *Cabaret*.


HOW FAR ALONG ARE WE?
0
PLANES

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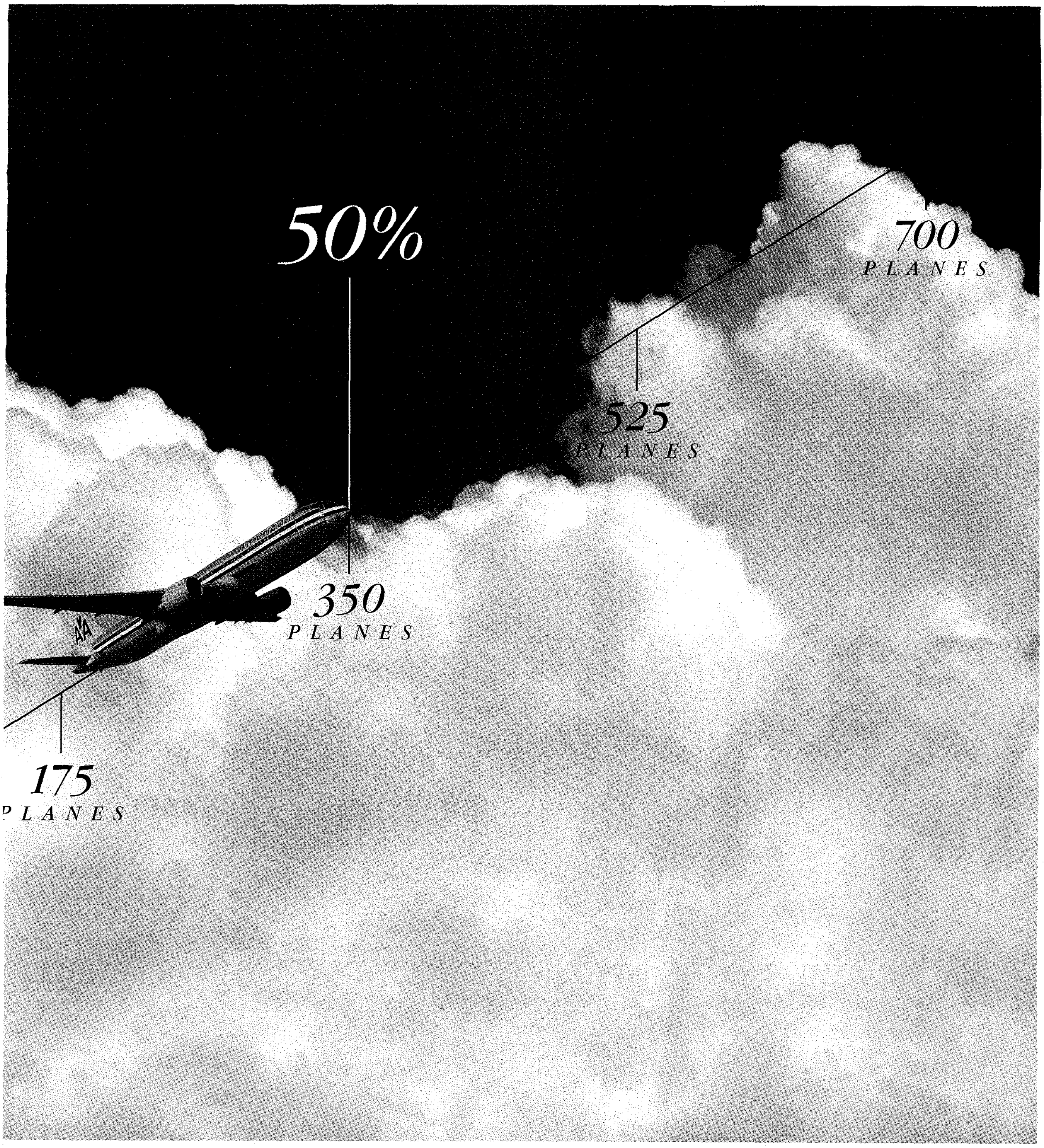
will be complete by November. In all, over 700 aircraft will offer more room. Row, after row, after r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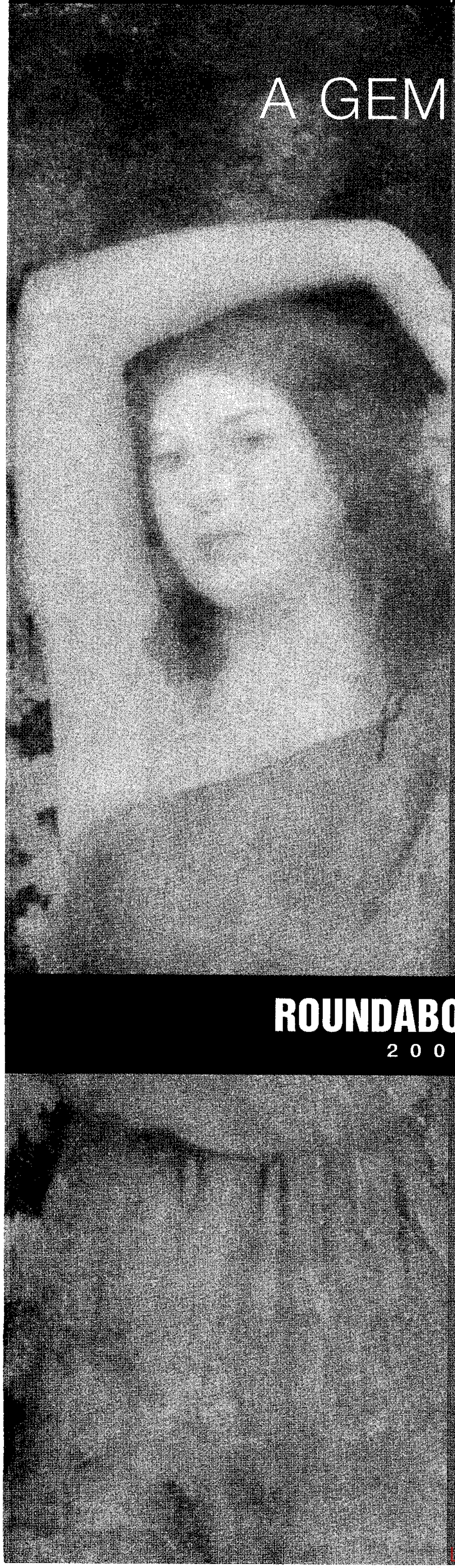
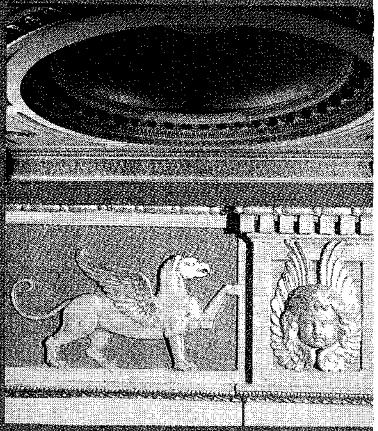


# A GEM OF A THEATRE FOR AUDIENCES AND ARTISTS ALIKE

**ROUNDABOUT'S NEW HOME,** the American Airlines Theatre, will be the most audience-friendly theatre in New York. Built in 1918 in an Italian Renaissance style, the theatre's well-proportioned proscenium stage will enable Roundabout to mount its plays and musicals in the type of space for which they were originally conceived. Taking its cue from many theatres built at the turn of the century with rooftop gardens, the American Airlines Theatre will boast a 3,500-square-foot penthouse lobby, complete with refreshment and lounging areas and an outdoor deck. Such modern conveniences will exceed the expectations of today's theatregoing public.



Decorative plasterwork and molding has been repaired and lovingly restored.
Left: detail of the theatre's rear house mural.

## ROUNDABOUTTHEATRECOMPANY

2000-01 SEASON

**WITH AN INTERIOR DESIGN** that celebrates the past while serving modern needs, the American Airlines Theatre is a physical manifestation of Roundabout's artistic and institutional goals —

A CLASSIC
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CLASSIC THEATRE.

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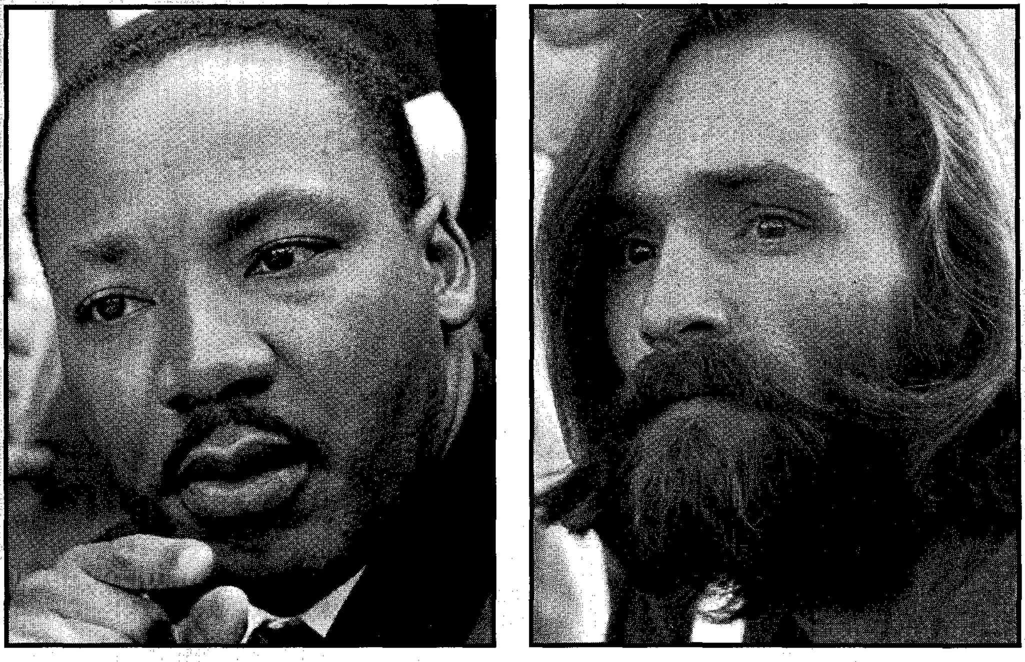

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Martin Short and Faith Prince in *Little Me*. Left: Students at the Public School Repertory Company (PSRC) perform in a production written, designed, and directed by fellow students.

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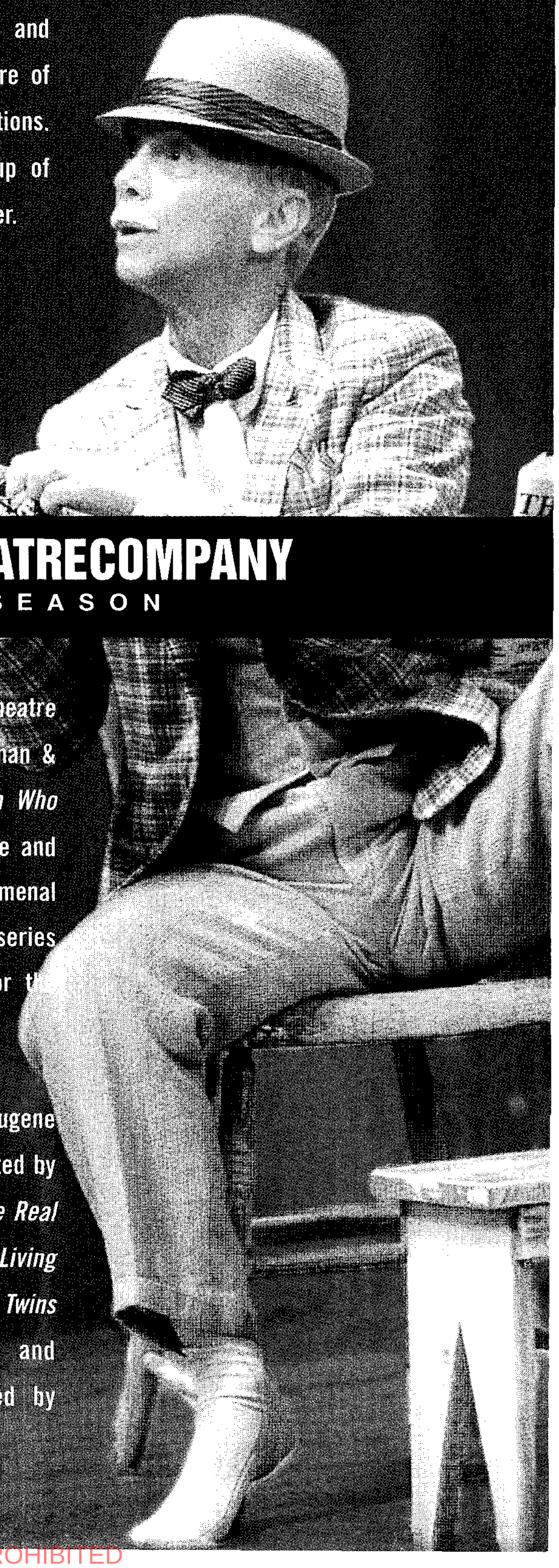

Joel Grey in *Give Me Your Answer, Do!*

## ROUNDABOUTTHEATRECOMPANY

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Swoosie Kurtz and Mandy Siegfried in *The Mineola Twins.*

**ROUNDABOUT'S** American Airlines Theatre will officially open in July with Kaufman & Hart's great comic classic *The Man Who Came to Dinner* starring Nathan Lane and directed by Jerry Zaks. This phenomenal production will be the first in a series of extraordinary revivals planned for the inaugural season.

**OTHER PRODUCTIONS** will include Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* directed by David Leveaux (*Anna Christie* and *The Real Thing*), Noël Coward's *Design for Living* directed by Joe Mantello (*The Mineola Twins* and *Love! Valour! Compassion!*), and Brian Friel's *Faith Healer* directed by Daniel Sullivan.

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## 2000-01 SEASON

MARY-LOUISE PARKER IN

### DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS

BY EUGENE O'NEILL
DIRECTED BY
DAVID LEVEAUX

Mary-Louise Parker, who earned an Obie Award for her performance in Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive*, stars in what is certain to be one of the most sizzling theatrical events of the season. David Leveaux, who staged Roundabout's Tony Award®-winning production of *Anna Christie* and is currently represented on Broadway with the Tony-nominated production of Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, will direct.

ALAN CUMMING IN

### DESIGN FOR LIVING

BY NOËL COWARD
DIRECTED BY
JOE MANTELLO

Tony Award®-winner Alan Cumming (*Cabaret*) returns to the Roundabout stage in a dazzling new production of this Noël Coward classic. Originally written for Coward himself and Broadway's golden couple, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, this witty comedy takes three decadent artists on a sexy romp through London, Paris, and New York in search of true love. Roundabout's Artistic Associate Joe Mantello (*The Mineola Twins, Love! Valour! Compassion!*) directs.

ALFRED MOLINA IN

### FAITH HEALER

BY BRIAN FRIEL
DIRECTED BY
DANIEL SULLIVAN

Drama Desk-winner Alfred Molina stars in this beautifully lyrical, richly entertaining play by the Tony Award®-winning author of *Dancing at Lughnasa*. *Faith Healer* tells the story of Francis Hardy, an Irish con man who, along with his wife and manager, has spent twenty years bringing makeshift miracles to little villages in Scotland and Wales. Directed by Daniel Sullivan, who staged this season's prize-winning productions of *A Moon for the Misbegotten* and *Dinner with Friends*.

### JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK

BY SEAN O'CASEY
DIRECTED BY
JOHN CROWLEY

One of the greatest of all Irish plays, Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* has delighted audiences since its first production at the Abbey Theatre in 1924. Directed by John Crowley, Associate Director of the famed Donmar Warehouse in London, this classic comedy about the trials and tribulations of an indomitable Dublin family captures not just a key moment in Irish history but the character and soul of a nation.

All architectural detail and mural photos © Z. Jedrus
All production photos by Joan Marcus

Stockard Channing and Laurence Fishburne in *The Lion in Winter*.

## AN ALMOST HOLY PICTURE

BY HEATHER MCDONALD
DIRECTED BY
MICHAEL MAYER

Samuel Gentle, groundskeeper for The Church of the Holy Comforter, has heard God's call but can't comprehend His mysteries. *An Almost Holy Picture*, which won the prestigious Kesselring Prize and was nominated for a Helen Hayes Award, is a luminous new play about one man's journey of faith. Acclaimed Roundabout Artistic Associate Michael Mayer (*Uncle Vanya, Side Man, A View from the Bridge*) directs.

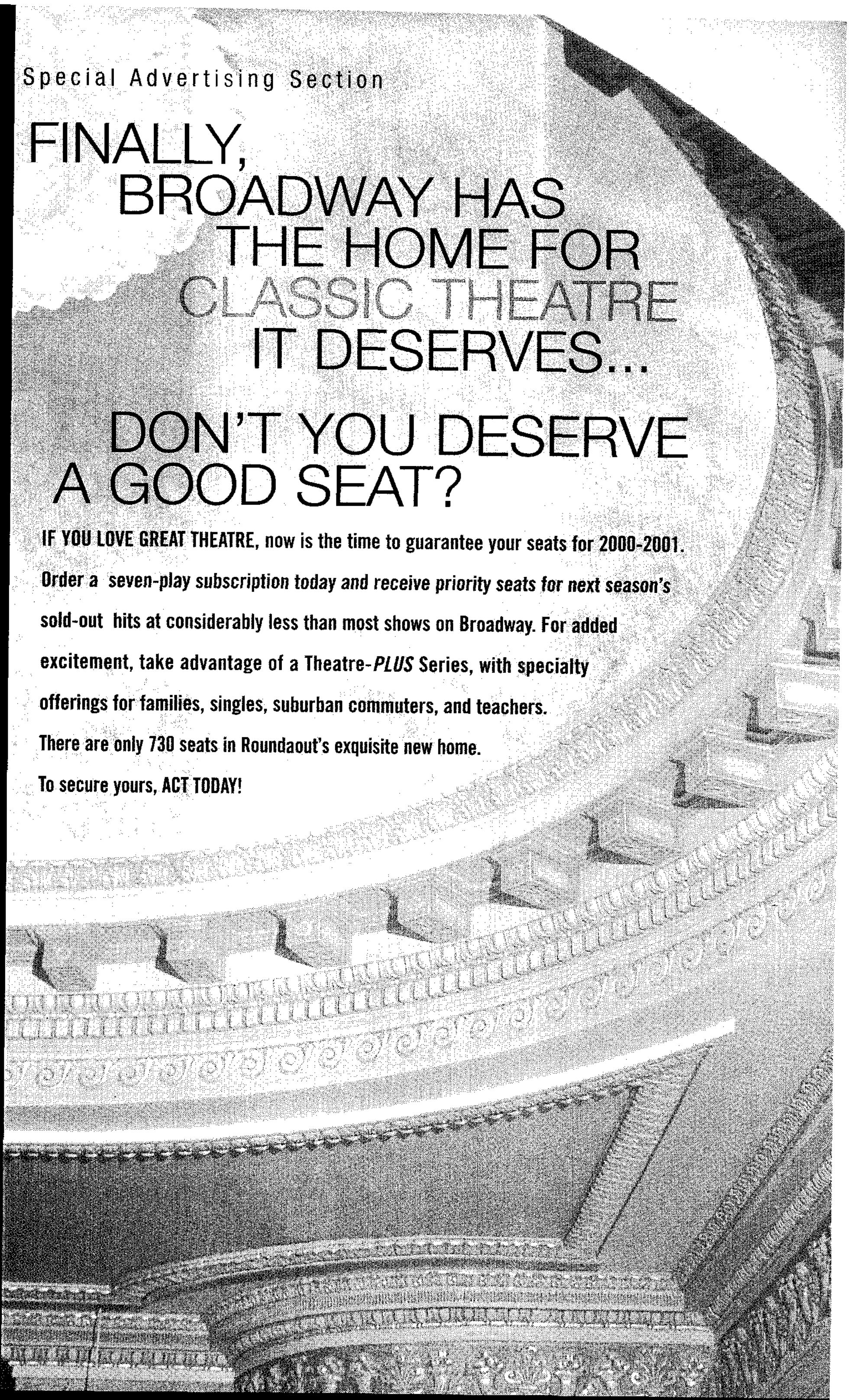
## FOLLIES

BOOK BY
JAMES GOLDMAN
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
STEPHEN SONDHEIM
CHOREOGRAPHY BY
KATHLEEN MARSHALL
DIRECTED BY
MATTHEW WARCHUS

Considered by many one of the greatest musicals of all time, *Follies* takes place in the once spectacular, but now crumbling Weissman Theatre. On the eve of its destruction, ghosts from its glorious past return and showgirls from decades ago reunite—and remember—one last time. Roundabout's production, directed by Matthew Warchus (*True West, Art*) will be the first major New York staging of *Follies* since it won seven Tony Awards® on Broadway in 1971.

## MORE GREAT THEATRE

The 2000-2001 season will be rounded out with a great play from this or a past century.



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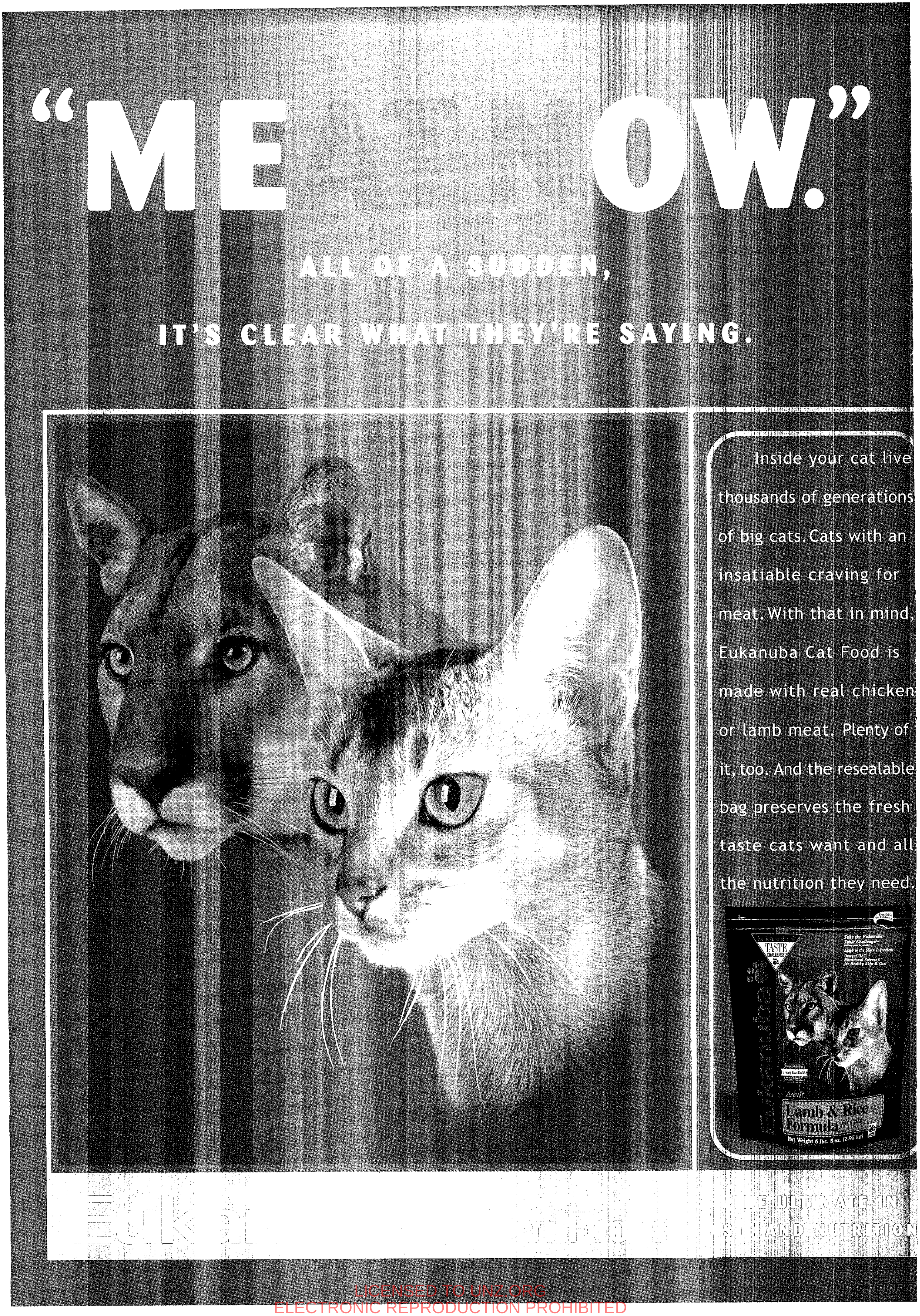
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### ANNALS OF LAW

# THE JUDGE HUNTER

*An unlikely crusader goes after New Hampshire's political establishment.*

### BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

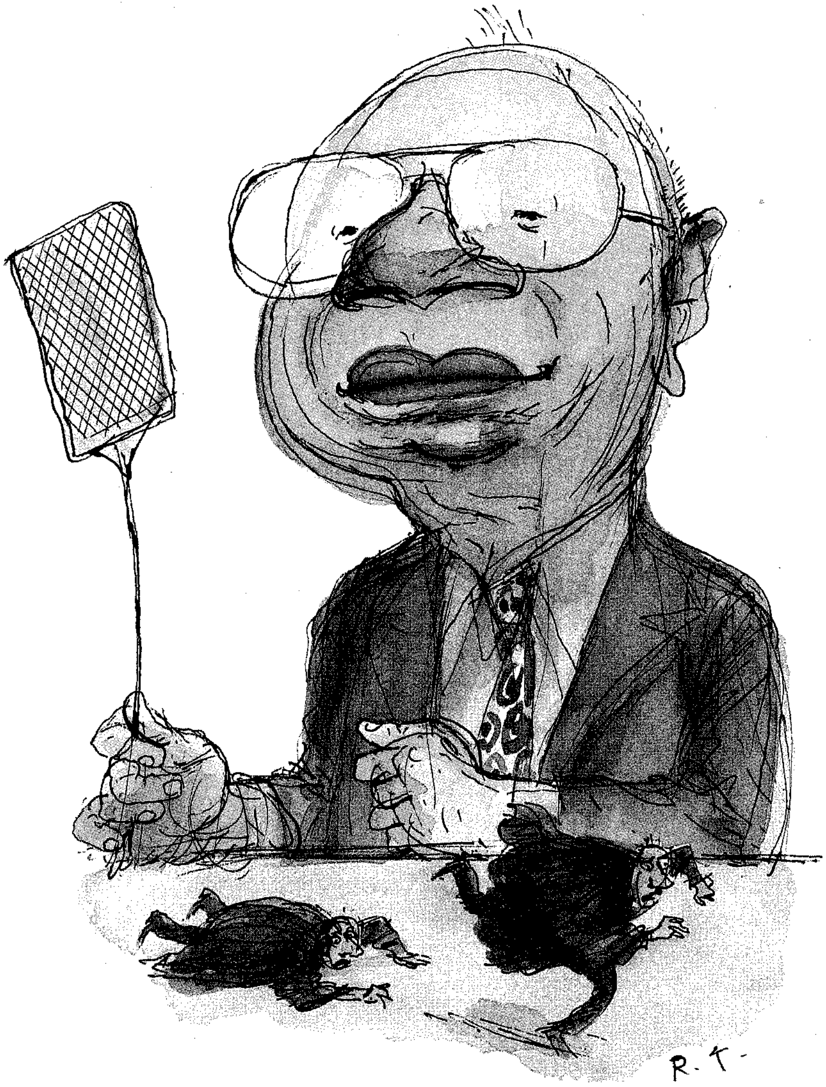
New Hampshire, the locals say, is a place that hates government but loves politics. Few states provide their citizens with a more meagre collection of public services, and all of New Hampshire's recent governors have taken the "pledge"—a public vow to oppose any income or sales tax. Yet, despite the modest size of its bureaucracy (or perhaps because of it), the state claims what is probably the most politically engaged citizenry in the nation. The state House of Representatives alone has four hundred members—a ratio of one for every three thousand or so people. (New York's legislature would need six thousand members to match that proportion.) Furthermore, every state representative, and the governor, must stand for election every two years. And, of course, there is the first-in-the-nation New Hampshire Presidential primary, which invariably plays a significant role in each race. "We're very proud that our people are so involved in politics," Governor Jeanne Shaheen told me. "People from other states are always amazed at how engaged they are. But no one has ever seen anything like what's happening now."

The Governor was referring to the crisis in the New Hampshire Supreme Court, where one judge, W. Stephen Thayer III, resigned on March 31st, after the state attorney general disclosed that Thayer had attempted to intervene in the court's handling of his own divorce. Then, in a move stemming from the same case, the House of Representatives began an impeachment investigation of three of the remaining four Justices, including the Chief Justice, David Brock. A special counsel for the House judiciary committee began taking private depositions last month, and public hearings on the charges will begin in July. Because a fifth Justice retired last year, Governor Shaheen may have the chance to name an entirely new court.

These extraordinary events were set in motion largely by one man—Theodore Kamasinski, who, as part of a lifelong war against what he regards as judicial corruption, represented Judge Thayer's wife in the divorce. When Kamasinski won the release of documents in the case, it might have been the beginning of the end not only of Judge Thayer's career but of a political way of life in New Hampshire. And it made Kamasinski a major public figure in New England—praised, for example, in the Boston *Globe* for providing a "compelling case for openness and accountability."

Kamasinski makes an unlikely crusader. A Brooklyn native, and a nonlawyer, Kamasinski, who is sixty-two, has used three names and has served jail time in three countries. He has lived in New Hampshire for just four years—part of that time in prison. Yet he has mastered the arcane rules and customs of a state that has long been controlled by a conservative Republican establishment. "You see this?" Kamasinski whispered, pointing at a local newspaper headline about him as we sat watching an early hearing on impeachment. "They used to call me a 'gadfly.' Now I'm a 'reformer.' "

Theo Kamasinski lives in a small town about twenty miles outside Concord, the capital. He calls the house he rents there "my bed and breakfast," but that is no longer exactly true. About



*Theo Kamasinski has lived in the state for just four years, part of that time in prison.*

RICHARD THOMPSON

ten months ago, his landlord's bank obtained a court order to seize the contents of the house. "They came with a locksmith and took everything—couches, tables, chairs," Kamasinski told me when I visited recently. The décor now might be called Xerox Moderne, for he has turned the place into a one-man factory for the production of legal briefs. The entrance hall is dominated by newly delivered boxes of computer paper. "I have a standing order for ten boxes a month," he told me—a total of fifty thousand sheets. "I go through a lot of paper."

Kamasinski's body appears to be made up of a series of circles. He is a little more than six feet tall, and is bald, so that his head looks like a perfect sphere, which makes it a slightly smaller version of his round belly. His face is dominated by thick glasses in big wire frames, which sit on top of a bulbous nose. He has more than a trace of New York left in his voice, goes heavy on the cologne, and speaks like a film-noir detective. (He told me that his house was cared for by "a coupla tomatas.") He speaks softly, but that belies his intensity. The political reporter for the Concord *Monitor* told me that Kamasinski sometimes calls him five times a day.

In his post as a self-appointed reformer, Kamasinski has filed hundreds of complaints about lawyers and judges with the state bar and court authorities. By his own estimate, he files a new one every week, and he supports his complaints with detailed briefs produced on a powerful computer system that was just about the only thing in the house to survive the locksmith's visit. "I have a hundred-and-sixty-five-gigabyte server," Kamasinski told me. "I have every federal and state decision that has ever been published—a better law library than any in New Hampshire." In contrast with most states, New Hampshire allows private citizens like Kamasinski, who neither holds a law degree nor took the bar exam, to represent clients in its courts. Kamasinski has a few clients of his own, but he makes his living, such as it is, by ghostwriting briefs for actual lawyers and by making business deals—which have often ended in legal disputes.

On the day we met this spring, Kamasinski and I were going to drive back to the capitol, in Concord, to attend a hearing of the executive council, the five-member government body that must approve the governor's nominations to the Supreme Court. To replace Justice Thayer, Shaheen had named a lower-court judge, Linda Dalianis, and the council would be hearing testimony on her nomination.

Before the session began, Kamasinski ran into Thomas Colantuono, one of the council members, in a hallway of the granite-walled capitol building, and said, "You got to stop the hearing. We haven't had a chance to do any investigation. No one has read any of her opinions." Over the previous couple of days, Kamasinski had scoured the state to collect the decisions—hundreds of them—that Dalianis had produced during twenty years as a judge. But neither the council members nor, apparently, anyone else in the state had bothered to study them.

Colantuono, who seemed desperate to escape from Kamasinski, merely said to him, "Make your pitch at the hearing. Make your pitch."

The hearing was a rout. The chairman of the council, a veteran politician named Bernard Streeter, announced at the outset that he had a pressing appointment in Nashua, so all speakers would be limited to three minutes. A procession of eminent judges, lawyers, and police officials supported the Dalianis appointment, and only an eccentric trio spoke out against her. One was a woman who had a grievance with another judge, and the second was Kamasinski, who scolded the council for rushing to approve Dalianis without examining her record. The third was Peter DeVere, who has waged a lengthy crusade to end the awarding of low-digit license plates to political insiders. (Dalianis's family has several.) Streeter, who is also the mayor of Nashua and has two such plates, brushed off DeVere by saying, "This was about the most ridiculous testimony I've ever heard."

Still, DeVere, nestled behind his own thick glasses, held his ground. "You know, I don't think you should even be running this hearing," he testified. "This judge's husband was your campaign manager when you ran for mayor. You shouldn't be doing this."

DeVere had a point. By any commonly accepted standards, Streeter had an egregious conflict of interest; if there were a formal code of ethics governing the conduct of the executive council, Streeter might well have been prohibited from evaluating the wife of his campaign manager. But there are no such rules in New Hampshire, where a tight-knit group of Republicans—including former Governors Meldrin Thompson, John H. Sununu, and Steven Merrill—have dominated the state for decades. For years, these governors nominated their friends and allies to judgeships, and there remains no process in place to make a serious evaluation of the judges' qualifications. The issue wasn't Dalianis herself, who appeared to have impeccable credentials, but, rather, the silent machinery of a cozy establishment.

Hearing DeVere's plea, which was ignored by the council, Kamasinski leaned over to me and said, "See? See what I mean?"

By Kamasinski's reckoning, his long journey from Brooklyn to Concord was guided by a single event: when Theodore Ratnoff, as he was called at birth, was a teen-ager, a car dealer passed a bad check to Ratnoff's father, a doctor in Queens. "My father sued to get his money back," he told me one night over dinner. "My mother said, 'Why don't you go to court with your father?' We wound up in front of this judge in New York named Mitchell Schweitzer, and he dismissed my father's case. He said something I'll never forget: 'This is my courtroom. I do what I want.' My father was mortified, even though he eventually won the case on appeal." The Judge's rebuke inspired Theo's lifelong interest in law—and his hostility to judges.

This may have been the crucial moment for Kamasinski, but there are other possibilities as well—such as the first time he was arrested. By the time Ratnoff was in his early thirties, he had, according to the *Times,* "a long police record that includes several convictions on larceny charges, eight months in New York City prison and a bond forfeiture in Greenwich, Conn." Charges like these—bad checks, nonpayment of rent, disappearance with investors' money—have pursued him for his entire life. Kamasinski/Ratnoff invariably offers complicated explanations for why the charges are unfounded, and says his convictions have been expunged, but his extensive encounters with the criminal-justice system bespeak a talent for guile, if not for fraud.

As a college dropout in the nineteen-sixties, Ratnoff cultivated an unusual hobby: electronic surveillance. He made his own bugs and body wires, and he began assisting reporters for *Life* in their investigations of judicial corruption. (Of Mitchell Schweitzer, among others: in 1972, Schweitzer resigned from the bench rather than face an inquiry into his connections with a known criminal.) Ratnoff's friends introduced him to Robin Moore, a writer who was then researching his book "The Happy Hooker," about the famous madam Xaviera Hollander. "Robin introduced him to me because he wanted the book to be as realistic as possible," Hollander, who now lives in Amsterdam, where she writes books and runs a bed and breakfast, told me. "So Teddy set up a bugging system for my place—those old reel-to-reel tape recorders that would go for twenty-four hours a day." In the book, which became a best-seller, the character of Abe the bugger is based on Ratnoff.

Around the same time, in 1970, investigators from the Knapp Commission, which was beginning its famous inquiry into corruption in the New York City Police Department, sought out Ratnoff. "We went to him for his equipment," Michael Armstrong, who was chief counsel to the commission, told me. "Teddy did our electronic stuff, and it was very good and very sophisticated. We were doing a scam where we set up some prostitutes, and we would go in and ask them what they knew about police corruption. Ratnoff said, 'You want to know a prostitute? I know a prostitute.' Xaviera Hollander was paying off a cop named Bill Phillips, and we sent Ratnoff himself in as the intermediary, wearing his own equipment. We had films of Phillips with Ratnoff as the undercover agent. Then one day they were meeting in the office of a lawyer who was a very prominent target. The lawyer told Phillips to pat Teddy down. Our agent, who was listening in, heard this, and

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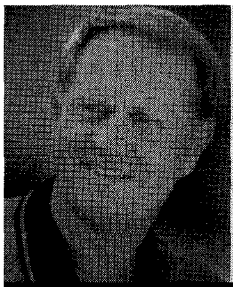

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they grabbed a cop off the street and tried to run up there and save Teddy. In burst our agent, saying, 'We're from the Knapp Commission.' Phillips had ripped off Teddy's wires, but they were still recording. Teddy could have been killed."

Phillips became an informant and then perhaps the single most important witness for the commission. "It was all because of Ratnoff," Armstrong told me. "He made the whole case for us." (Phillips was later convicted of a double murder, and he remains in prison.)

Ratnoff's triumph, however, had a postscript that would become a familiar pattern in his life: brief glory followed by trouble with the law. On March 23, 1972, he was indicted by a Manhattan grand jury and charged with grand larceny, conspiracy, bribery, and thirty-six counts of illegal eavesdropping. According to the front-page story in the *Times* announcing his indictment, Ratnoff was accused of conspiring with Hollander to protect a police sergeant who was one of her clients. Rather than face the charges, Ratnoff spent most of the next decade in Europe. The government tried to extradite him, and he was imprisoned in London for about two months. After his release—the United States lost its extradition case—he spent a year in Poland, trying to start a business that turned the computer chips in adding machines into components for walkie-talkies. (Not surprisingly, the venture failed.) During this time, he used different names—first Theodore Randall (which he had sometimes used in the United States), and then Theodore Kamasinski, in honor of his year in Poland. "I wanted to get lost for a while," he told me.

Eventually, Kamasinski made his way to Austria, and there, in 1981, he was convicted of fraud and misrepresentation. "He had been in prison for a year and a half, and he wanted to bring a case in the European Court of Human Rights protesting his treatment there," Anthony D'Amato, a professor at the Northwestern School of Law, outside Chicago, told me. So D'Amato and Kamasinski filed the first complaint ever filed in that court by an American. The court rejected most of their claims, but they won on one point: "The court found that when Theo appealed his conviction the Austrian supreme court heard the case in private. It did not allow Theo to be present or his lawyer to make any arguments. While that was just a tiny part of Theo's adventure, it was the court saying to this government that you have to change your constitution on a public-appeals process. And it did. Austria changed its procedures because of Theo." The conviction was subsequently nullified.

After returning from Europe, Kamasinski had a characteristically eventful stay in Connecticut, where he filed a series of successful lawsuits aimed at giving the public access to judicial complaints. Then, in a case that arose from a dispute with his erstwhile attorney Anthony D'Amato, who had invested thousands of dollars in a Kamasinski project to build self-storage facilities in New England, he was charged in a federal indictment in New Hampshire. According to D'Amato, who seems to view his former client with a sort of weary amusement, "Theo had not invested the money. He just put it in his pocket."

Having moved to New Hampshire to defend himself against the charges, Kamasinski found a land of opportunity—a place where he could put his idiot-savant mastery of the law to work without having to hire attorneys. "There was some publicity in my case because I discovered that they kept the public out of federal jury selection in New Hampshire," Kamasinski told me. And the federal criminal case against him in New Hampshire, the one based on D'Amato's allegations, was eventually dismissed. The victory won him an important new admirer, Caroline Douglas, who was married to Charles G. Douglas III.

In the early nineties, the Douglases were a golden couple of the New Hampshire Republican Party. Charles had served on the state's Supreme Court and one term in Congress. He married Caroline in 1991, and they hosted a politically conservative cable-television show, wrote a book on divorce and family law, and practiced law in the same firm. In 1996, however, their marriage—his fourth, her second—broke up, and they began a much publicized divorce proceeding (which included a spirited battle over their low-digit license plate). In time, Caroline came to believe that all the state's lawyers, including her own, were complicitous in a sinister old-boy network, and she started to represent herself. She also discovered a kindred spirit—that is, after he was released on bail.

"Caroline got my number and told me about her situation," Kamasinski said. "She had failed to show up for her divorce trial, and the judge had ruled for her husband on everything. I'd said I'd write her appeal for her to the state Supreme Court." Caroline Douglas won the appeal, and it was an embarrassing defeat for her husband, as a former member of that court. (Four years later, parts of the multi-tentacled Douglas divorce case remain before the courts.)

Not long afterward, Kamasinski noticed another rancorous matrimonial lawsuit involving a member of the New Hampshire Supreme Court. "What happened was, I was reading the newspaper, and I saw they had sealed up part of the record in the Thayer divorce case," Kamasinski explained. "I called up Judy Thayer and asked her whether she would mind if I made a motion to have the files released. An attorney from the *Union Leader*"—the biggest newspaper in the state—"eventually joined me in it." Kamasinski was launched.

Judith and W. Stephen Thayer III had a great deal in common with Caroline and Charles G. Douglas III. Both were dynamic, two-career Republican couples. Stephen Thayer was an early political supporter of Ronald Reagan's, and in 1981 the President appointed

*"It's Doris Kearns Goodwin. Is there anything we'd like to know about the Presidency?"*

him the United States Attorney in New Hampshire, even though he was just seven years out of law school. In the late eighties, Judith Thayer served as the chairwoman of the state board of education, a high-profile job. In 1986, Governor Sununu named the thirty-nine-year-old Thayer to the New Hampshire Supreme Court. Like Douglas, who was only thirty-four when he joined the court, Thayer owed his appointment more to his political connections in the state's Republican establishment than to a record of judicial or scholarly achievement.

As with the Douglases', the Thayers' divorce was both bitter and widely publicized in New Hampshire. Kamasinski won his motion to unseal the files, and the records revealed that Judge Thayer had failed to list on a bank-loan application that he had borrowed fifty thousand dollars from Emile Bussiere, a lawyer with frequent business before the courts. This news drew a lot of attention, and it prompted an investigation of Thayer by the state's Judicial Conduct Committee and by the F.B.I. Though the government ultimately declined to press charges, the Thayer divorce grew even uglier. In one proceeding, the Thayers' fifteen-year-old son stood up in court and yelled sarcastically, "Thanks a lot, Dad. Thanks for everything you've done." Judith Thayer refused to leave the family home, even though a judge had ordered that it be sold. In order for the sale to take place, sheriff's deputies broke down the doors and literally put Judith and her children out into the rain.

"It was one of the most horrendous experiences of my life, including my year in Vietnam," Judge Thayer told me recently. "I was faced with litigation that was never intended to resolve the issues in the divorce but, rather, to destroy me and my reputation and my ability to function as a judge."

The pressure seems to have nearly unhinged Thayer. In January of this year, Judith Thayer appealed the divorce itself to the Supreme Court. Thayer, of course, was disqualified from hearing his own case, and his colleagues, including Chief Justice David Brock, also recused themselves. That left Brock with the task of appointing lower-court judges who would serve in their place. On February 3rd, Brock completed the Thayer panel by choosing Philip Mangones, a lower-court judge, and George Pappagianis, a retired lower-court judge.

The events of the following day, February 4th, were reconstructed in meticulous detail in a report by the state attorney general, Philip McLaughlin. That afternoon, Brock told his colleagues, at their regular weekly meeting, that he was appointing Mangones and Pappagianis to the Thayer case. By all accounts, Thayer objected vociferously to Pappagianis.

Under the law governing the behavior of judges, it seems clear that Thayer should have had nothing to do with the assignment of judges in his own divorce case. But, instead of telling Thayer to mind his own business, Chief Justice Brock looked into removing Pappagianis from the case. Brock left the meeting and went down the hall to see the clerk of the court, Howard Zibel—who happened to be on the telephone with Pappagianis at that very moment. Brock told Zibel that "Steve and Sherm"—that is, Judges Thayer and Sherman D. Horton, Jr.—objected to Pappagianis's appointment, and that it would be best to "slow this down." But Zibel said that he had already made the offer to Pappagianis. Brock returned to the conference and informed his colleagues that Pappagianis would have to remain on the panel. (Thayer told me that he objected only after he thought that Pappagianis had been appointed.)

Zibel, conscience-stricken, realized that Thayer should not have been interfering in his own case—and that Brock shouldn't have been helping him—so he wrote a memorandum outlining his misgivings and shared it with a former Justice, who suggested that Zibel go to Attorney General McLaughlin. During February and March, McLaughlin conducted a secret investigation of the maneuverings on the court and reached, in effect, a plea-bargain deal with Thayer. On Friday, March 31st, McLaughlin released a public report on the whole saga and announced that Thayer would resign from the Supreme Court in return for a promise that no criminal charges be brought against him. ("I had endured something that no public official in the state had ever endured," Thayer told me. "The fight was out of me. It was time to get on with my life—even though I am confident I did nothing wrong.")

The next Monday, Chief Justice Brock tried to strike back. In a speech broadcast live on New Hampshire television, the imperious, white-haired Brock denounced the Attorney General's report as "factually incomplete, distorted by omission, and just plain wrong." Brock's failure to acknowledge even the possibility that he and his fellow-Justices had acted improperly inflamed the state House of Representatives, which disdained the court in the best of circumstances. In 1997, the Supreme Court had, rather courageously, struck down the state's antiquated method of financing education, and the legislature has spent the subsequent years struggling to come up with a substitute while remaining true to its anti-tax traditions. The House promptly voted, three hundred and forty-three to seven, to begin an impeachment investigation of Brock, Horton, and John Broderick. To some, the investigation looks like payback time.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court remains in a shambles. The three Justices under investigation decided not to hear any cases in May, devoting themselves instead to fighting their impeachment. Brock's defense amounts to no-harm, no-foul—that is, Pappagianis was named to the Thayer panel after all—but the Chief Justice has drawn only modest support from the state's legal community. The cases against Horton and Broderick are certainly weaker, because they were peripheral players in the drama.

Thayer last month suffered the indignity of facing Kamasinski in a Manchester courtroom and asking the judge to reduce his support payments to his wife and family because he is now unemployed. Thayer will not, however, fade quietly from the scene. "I played by the rules as I understood them," he told me. "The way we worked it, we all received all the draft opinions. Even when one of us was recused, we all read the opinions, and even the judges who could not vote were free to make comments. We all did it, and there were certainly times when judges commented on cases where they had very close ties with people involved in the case."

None of this, of course, satisfies Theo Kamasinski. He's convinced that the New Hampshire old-boy network will find a way to save the three Justices from expulsion. "The lawyers here have no balls," he explained. Meanwhile, he continues filing complaints against his adversaries at his usual pace. (And vice versa: the lawyer who engineered the seizure of his furniture last summer was none other than former Supreme Court Justice Charles G. Douglas III.)

Like most renegades, Kamasinski appeared to operate totally outside the system, but he actually tapped into forces that were already transforming the state. The strange New Hampshire obsession with low-digit license plates tells much the same story. The plates come with no official privileges, not even parking, but they do confer a feeble kind of status and insiderdom. "You're driving around and people think you are someone—or you were someone once," a New Hampshire politico told me. "But only the old-timers even know about the whole thing. Fewer and fewer people care about it now."

The Republican clique that ran New Hampshire for decades—the low-digit crowd—was already on its way out when Steve Thayer self-destructed. (Governor Shaheen, for example, is a Missouri-born Democrat and a woman, whose own family plates are in the less fashionable four digits. And in declaring for re-election last week Shaheen refused to take the tax pledge.) The newcomers are bringing the more open and orderly procedures that the rest of the country long ago adopted—including clear rules on conflicts of interest, meaningful scrutiny of judicial candidates, and appointment policies that reflect the new realities of a diverse and growing state.

Of course, it needed an eccentric like Kamasinski to shake the state to its granite core, and he has plans to take his act to more states. It won't be easy. Corruption and indifference pose enough challenges for most law reformers, but this one has to worry about extradition, too—his own. After all, Kamasinski said, "There's still a warrant for my arrest in New York." ♦

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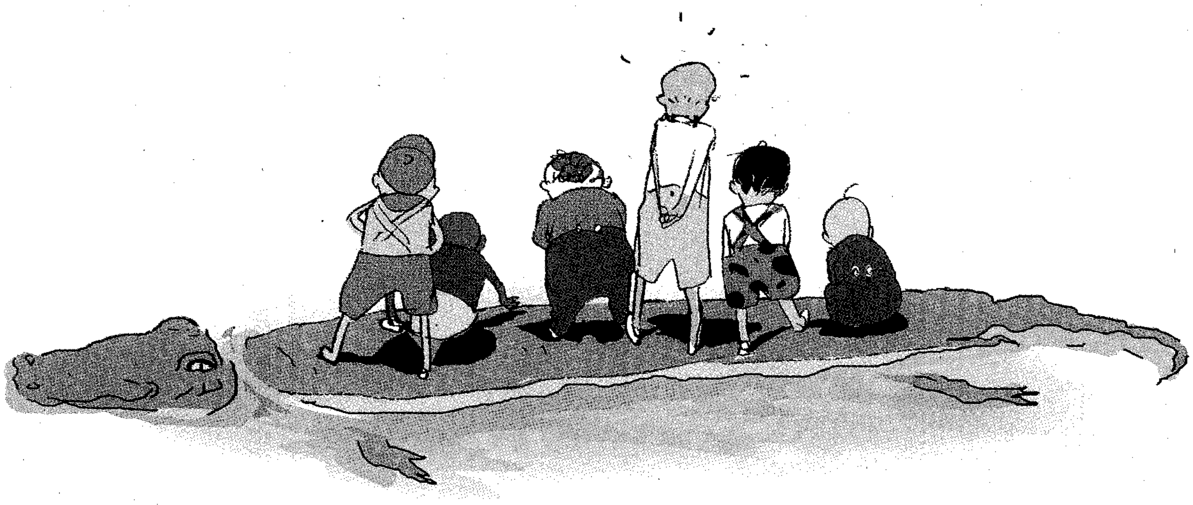
## SHOUTS & MURMURS

# STILL A FEW OPENINGS, BUT HURRY

## BY BRUCE McCALL

*Camp Two Strikes* can arrange to have your child FedExed overnight in time for the beginning of the first summer session. Specializing in negatively gifted children, Two Strikes is located on the remote grounds of a former United States Marine Corps boot camp entirely surrounded by razor-wire-topped electric fencing. Its nonaccredited status allows a richly varied activities program tailored to the high-energy, discipline-averse camper's need for behavior modification without prescription drugs. Highlights include internships with the French Foreign Legion. Reminder: Gun registration is the camper's personal responsibility.



ISTVAN BANYAI

*Lost Trails* is America's only for-profit, all-indoors, sports-free sweatshop camp. Campers rise before the sun to earn their evening meal in challenging fourteen-hour days spent learning the intricacies of textile piecework. Lost Trails's communal assembly-line life style gives new meaning to the concept of "teamwork"; the hut that most exceeds the day's quota gets to keep the hookah overnight.

*Sasquatch Pines* teaches self-reliance and initiative with a unique "virtual camp" concept that dispenses with the conventional bungalows-by-the-lake experience in favor of paradropping your child into the forests of Washington State and waiting for him or her to emerge six weeks later—or whenever—a newly mature individual.

*Camp O-No-No* is a toxin-, sugar-, starch-, glucose-, MSG-, dairy-, salt-, meat-, fur-, leather-, TV-, plastic-, Red Dye No. 2-, smoke-, money-, and humor-free Living Zone designed to teach vegan agnostic children who have overcome body shame all about the "four O's": the Ozone Layer, the Oil Cartel, the Oligarchy of Racist Rulers, and the Oats-Only Diet. Campers are encouraged to deprogram sports enthusiasts through peer ridicule and to make their own chess sets using one-hundred-per-cent-organic Third World-based materials.

*Camp Win-Win Winds*: That panty-waist little bird-lover who cries at funerals and won't play football doesn't need another whipping. He or she needs Win-Win Winds, where there's a bully in every bunk and losers learn to quit whining or it's "Gimme a hundred pushups, Mister!" After two months of a privacy-free life busting rocks and heads in this maximum-security former stone quarry, your boy or girl could walk off with the George S. Patton Most Dehumanized Camper Prize and a whole litter of kittens to drown.

*Camp Put and Call* guides campers away from *making* wallets and toward *filling* them. This camp's intensive, hands-on, fast-track, stock-watering, stock-kiting, and stock-manipulation course, taught by a former S.E.C. overseer in an authentic "boiler room" atmosphere, is not for the nervous or commitment-averse: Put and Call's motto, "Everybody hates a snitch," is strictly enforced.

*Camp Wail-Away* is America's only nonaccredited summer sleepover experience that *guarantees* to cure annoying homesickness, even in children under eight—or your money and your camper back. Wail-Away's unique "you don't ask, we don't tell" policy cloaks the goings on within its gates behind a curtain of secrecy. With your child secure in our communication-blackout zone, you'll have no cards or letters to answer, no packages to send, and no tearful Sunday-morning collect calls to field. Just across Lake Agony at *Camp Catatonia*, a grizzled staff of former prison matrons has never met a bed wetter they couldn't break. A positive experience? Many therapists say the influence of Camps Wail-Away and Catatonia made their careers. In any event, you can laugh off all those "horror stories" when Junior comes sobbing home again. Everybody knows kids are sneaky lying brats. ♦

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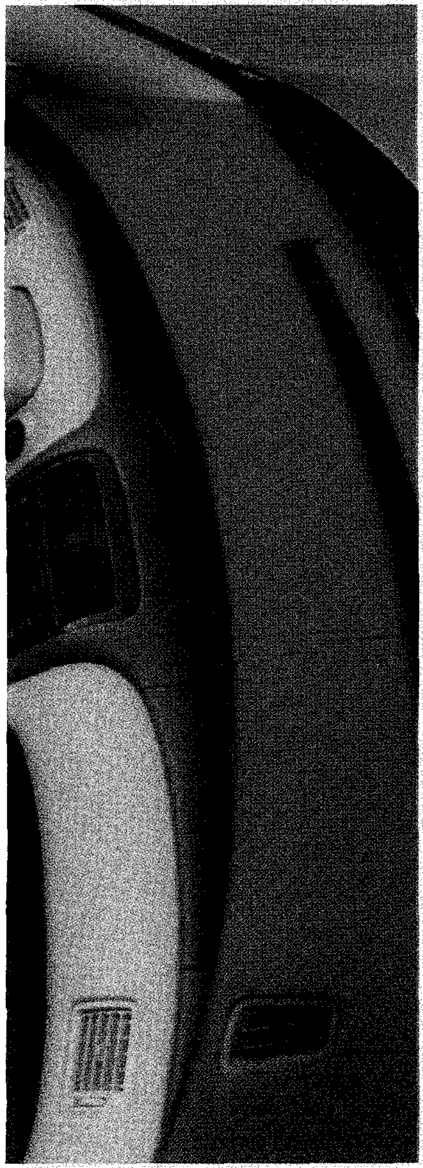

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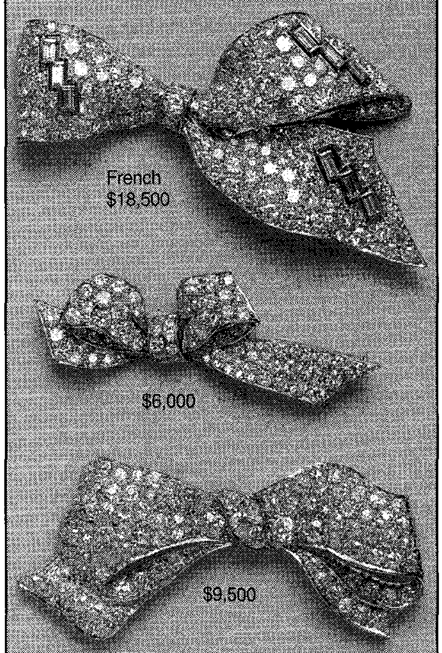

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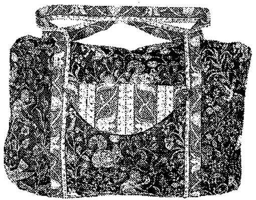

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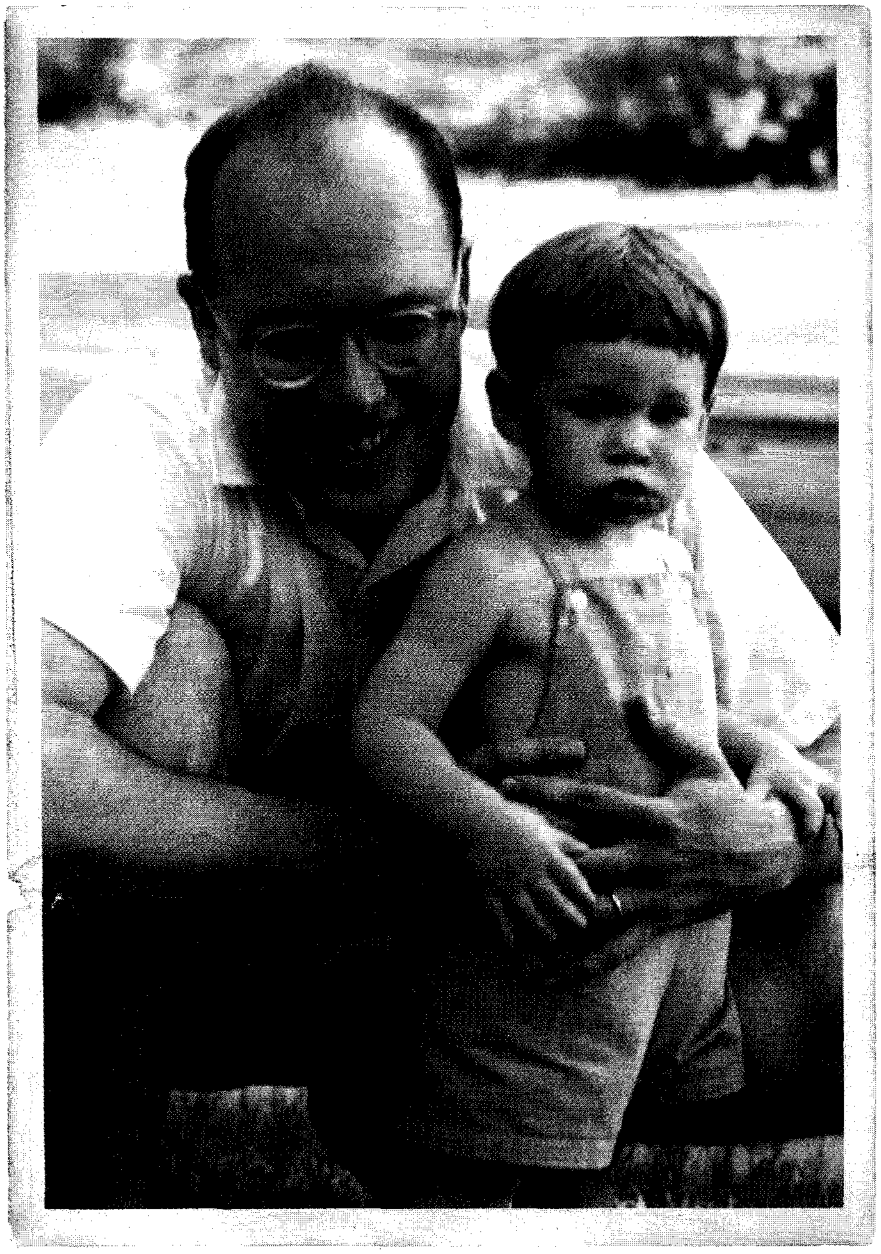
PERSONAL HISTORY

# MY FATHER'S TROUBLES

*A memoir of love and madness.*

BY NICHOLAS DAWIDOFF



*When I look at old snapshots, I am always surprised by how happy we seem.*

COURTESY REBECCA ROLLAND

My first memory of my father is of leaving him. For months, he had been unhinged, experiencing hallucinations so powerful that he communicated with dead squirrels. Then he began hitting my mother, and not long after that she decided it was time for us to go. It was raining steadily when my mother, my younger sister, and I drove away from Washington for the long ride to our new home in New Haven, Connecticut. I was three. At a certain point, I remember seeing the water streaming down the car window and deciding that the sky was unhappy, too.

During the next several years, I made a couple of visits to Washington. When I was six, my father took me to the National Zoo, where he got angry and walked away from me. Only by running along after him was I able to keep him in sight. He went up a sloping walkway, and I followed until, finally, he slowed enough for me to catch him. My father didn't look at me, but he let me follow two steps behind.

Later, when he was living in New York, I'd occasionally stay overnight with him. Once, when I was nine, I was in bed in the back room of his cramped garden apartment. My father was sitting next to me, and he wanted to tell me about his encounters with Italian prostitutes. I managed to put all the details out of my head except for a description of a Roman bordello decorated in red velvet. Over the years, every time I entered his apartment I expected to see the red velvet.

After I had finished college and moved to New York, my father asked me to meet him one day at the Yale Club. I was talking with him in the middle of the lobby when, suddenly, his eyes looked strange and he began screaming at me, telling me—and the cocktail-hour throng—what a horrible person I was. I ran out of there. Some nights, I'd arrive home to encounter my father standing in front of my apartment building, waiting there to let me know what a pathetic excuse for a son he had.

At Manhasset High School, on Long Island, Donald Dawidoff was the valedictorian of the class of 1952, a member of the National Honor Society, and a varsity athlete who starred on the football and lacrosse teams with the future N.F.L. Hall of Famer Jim Brown. My father was also a French-horn player in the orchestra and the jazz band, and an editor on the school newspaper. His classmates voted him "Most Likely to Succeed."

At Harvard, he was admitted to the select History and Literature program, and one year, in lacrosse, he finished among the nation's leaders in assists. A photograph of him making a graceful feed appeared in *Sports Illustrated.* But life in Cambridge became too much for him. In the spring of 1955, when he was a junior, there were some troubles with a girlfriend, and he was given the first bad grade of his life. Then, one morning, he saw all around him huge faces with green ears. He began giving away his possessions—all of them, right down to his watch. My grandmother has always described the telephone call she received that week from Harvard with the same words. "Mrs. Dawidoff, come get your son," she was told. "He's crazy."

My grandparents did what they were told, and arranged to take him to a sanitarium in Connecticut. A few months later, my father returned to Harvard, and completed his degree cum laude. He then spent a semester at Harvard Law School, but did poorly and left.

That summer (by then it was 1958), my father took a job at a camp in New Hampshire, where he met Heidi Gerschenkron, the daughter of a Harvard economics professor. In July, my grandfather—Donald's father—died, and Donald went to pieces. It took him a year to recover. Then, in the fall of 1959, he went back to law school—Yale this time—and returned to Heidi Gerschenkron. They were married the next year. By 1962, he was working for a prestigious firm in New York and he was a father—my father.

One day, he came home from work and confessed to my mother that a partner in his law firm had told him he was "a lame horse, and I wouldn't keep a lame horse in my stable." So we moved to Washington, where my father went to work in the Office of the General Counsel of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Shortly before my sister, Sally, was born, in late 1964, he suffered a complete breakdown.

Many years later, my mother told me what it was like to watch her husband fall apart. It began with non sequiturs. Friends would be visiting, and during a conversation about politics my father would offer a comment that made it clear he thought they were discussing a George Bernard Shaw play. Soon the hallucinations returned. He believed that everybody was talking about him, and that rodents in the yard were giving him special instructions. He grew violent. My mother says I couldn't eat. My sister wasn't sleeping. Fifteen months after Sally was born, my mother put us in the car and headed back to New Haven.

When I look at snapshots of my father and me as a young boy—in one I am sitting in a red fire truck, my father crouched behind, his arms circling my shoulder—I am always surprised by how happy we seem. "You were crazy about him," people tell me. Since I didn't see much of him anymore, I tried to compensate by spending time with his photograph. I would sit in a rocking chair and stare at his handsome bald head for hours.

In 1970, my father abruptly quit his government job, moved back to New York, and opened his own law office. Once a month, on a Sunday, he'd ride the train up to New Haven. He always took Sally and me to the International House of Pancakes for lunch. That was my father's effort to inject a sense of the quotidian into the relationship, his attempt to be a normal dad. In fact, these visits had the quality of a long-distance love affair. Each one came after such a lengthy interlude that they felt like occasions, not ordinary life.

Back at the house, he could be a lot of fun. He invented a belly-tickling game called "So it does that, does it?," which I liked a lot, and he gave me a nickname, Rascal, that suited me fine. Like many children from immigrant families, my father was devoted to the English language. He was fond of puns and worked them out in elaborate ways. After Zbigniew Brezinski got a job in the government, my father's response was to ask me what a jailed national-security adviser was. "I don't know," I said. "A Zbig in a poke." Dad collected unusual nomenclature the way some men amass stamps or coins. When the basketball star Lew Alcindor changed his name to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, my father was ecstatic at the possibilities. "Say it, Dad, say it," I would plead, and he'd grin and repeat the name again and again for me, lingering on the hard vowels like an auctioneer.

In a beautiful tenor, he sang American folk songs like "The Ship Titanic" and "Deep Blue Sea." Abstract art made sense to him, and so did American Indian paintings. He liked bespoke suits, and Paul Robeson, and Mel

Ott. My father was a lover of elegance.

There was a period when my chief interest lay in road construction. One day, my father took me to visit the Leonard Concrete Pipe Company, in Hamden, Connecticut. On the way out, I somehow persuaded him to buy a souvenir for me: a three-foot section of concrete sewer pipe. I have no idea how we got the thing home, but I know that when my mother saw Dad and me on her porch with it, she directed us around to the cellar entrance, at the rear of the house. As my father, the pipe, and I went by, our nosy next-door neighbor remarked, "Now I know why she divorced him." I recently visited my mother in New Haven and went down to the cellar. The pipe was still where Dad and I had left it.

When I was eight, he took me to my first baseball game—a Mets-Pirates contest at Shea Stadium that went into extra innings. My mother and sister were camped out at his apartment, waiting to take me home, and, as the hours passed, I worried about upsetting them, but he said they would understand, explaining that real fans stayed for the whole game. And so we did—all fifteen innings. Many years later, I realized that it was one of the few times he ever tried to impart wisdom to me. Usually, it was a babysitter, a family friend, or my father's younger brother, Robert, who taught me how to catch a ball, ride a bike, knot a necktie. As I got older, I always had male friends close to my father's age. I notice now that I chose men who were successful, intelligent, and, almost invariably, bald.

There were times when I'd observe other father-and-son relationships and long for them. Then I'd become angry and sullen. During a summer vacation, my mother took me to the Baseball Hall of Fame, in Cooperstown, and as I walked around the little village, looking at all the boys with their fathers, I felt diminished at having come to such a place with my mom.

One night when I was thirteen, Dad called while we were eating dinner. When he asked my sister how she was, Sally replied that she'd had a bad day. "You come by that naturally," he said. "I'm mentally ill." Sally hung up and told us, "Dad says he's mentally ill." I can't remember that evening at all, but my mother says that this disclosure upset me terribly—"You cried and cried for months."

With that exception, nobody really talked with me about what was wrong with my father. Family members made vague references to my father being "in the hospital again," but that was it. He saw many psychiatrists and was given prescriptions for all kinds of antipsychotic medications, but they never seemed able to decide what the problem was.

In the early years, both of my parents had made an effort to shield Sally and me, but things were different after I got to be old enough to go in to New York unescorted to see him. As my train pulled into Grand Central Station, I never knew which Dad would be meeting me. He always looked the same, but his speech was often not lucid, his behavior erratic. When he got into altercations with people we encountered on sidewalks or in restaurants, when he told me things I knew he shouldn't—he liked to describe new women he wanted to "lay"—when he suddenly lashed out at me, I didn't know what to do. Your father is supposed to protect you, and mine was scaring the hell out of me.

Many times, I told my mother I didn't want to go to see him, but she never made our visits optional. On the appointed Sunday morning, before she put

## HELLENISTIC HEAD

She's in two worlds, her veil blown half across her face:
hair a dense crown of hyacinth knots, her one
visible eye gone blank. How to make marble drift
like muslin, like sea mist, across a brow?
Under the scarf, the daydream stirs:
gash in the morning torn
by the white horse loosed, careening
across two parkway lanes and up the median grass,
thunder made flesh in haunches and arcing neck
as cars streamed by like a doubled Milky Way,
and two small dark figures, arms upraised,
jostled along the highway shoulder, swinging rope.
We were children, nestled by speed into the back seat
of our speeding car. The horse was a comet,
mane and tail igniting a drizzled day.

And we are gone in the hurtling car, my brother and I,
forty years gone in that torrent of fumes and chrome
that snatched away childhood house and barn and the hummocky field,
slow-syrup hours of Sunday afternoons
with creaky floorboards and spiders curled in the knotholes of beams,
and the demigods who drove the car and admonished us
and conversed unknowably in the sanctum of the front seat.

The horse's eyes bulged yogurt-white from bloody rims,
big as croquet balls and veiny with panic,
but sparked, too, with glee
to see his world so streamingly wide and fast.
He was likely, it was clear, to be horribly hurt.
He was likely to kill people.
In the Hellenistic head,
half the face freezes in the fully empty gaze.
The other half is stone that turns into wind.

—*Rosanna Warren*

us on the train my mother would call around New York to get reassurances about what kind of shape he was in, and, as far as I know, nobody ever told her, "Don't send them." Even as a small boy, I was bothered by the idea that he was my responsibility, and not the reverse. As I got older, I saw that it was a moral obligation to spend time with this person I had begun to loathe.

My father stopped making child-support payments a few years after the divorce. At home, in New Haven, there was so little money that we drank powdered milk and never ate out, except for a trip to Burger King once a year. My mother slept in the living room. The sound of her struggling to open the convertible sofa made me want to grow up fast. My father tried to work, but the few clients he managed to recruit in New York he often lost, not because he was incompetent but because he couldn't tolerate the pressure of a case or get along with anybody or stay healthy. People would say to my grandmother that maybe Donald ought to try something a little less stressful, but my grandmother had arrived on New York's Lower East Side from Eastern Europe speaking no English, and became one of New York's first woman lawyers. The prospect of her son the attorney working at a lesser job made her say, "For this, he went to Harvard?" My father felt the same way.

My grandmother became my father's primary source of income. When he took me to a hobby shop to buy model soldiers for my birthday, I knew that my grandmother was paying for them. The same was true the year he took Sally and me on vacation to Maine. Still, I would hear of the new car he intended to buy, and about the savings account he would soon be opening up for my college tuition.

Holidays were always hard. One Thanksgiving, when I was in high school, he showed up dressed as a rabbi and carrying a New Testament in both hands, outstretched like an offering. As he made his rounds, his hands violently shaking, everyone just said, "Hello, Donald, Happy Thanksgiving." Each time he approached me, I studied the fibres of the rug fabric. When he finally left, a great-aunt collapsed into an armchair with a huge glass of gin.

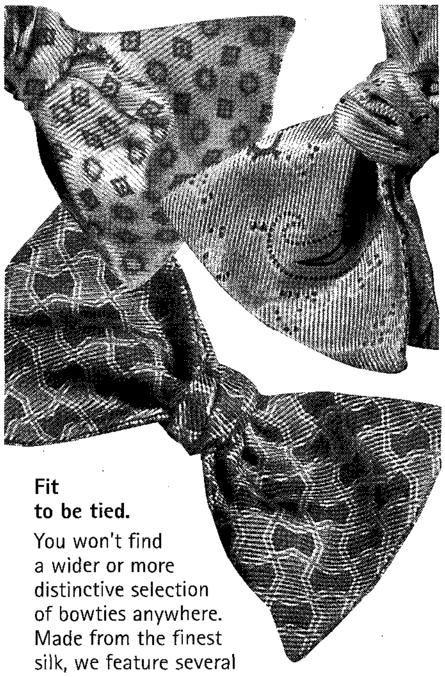
Some years, there were two Thanksgiving dinners. Early in the day, Sally and I would meet him at our grandmother's for turkey. Then, in the late afternoon, he'd go home, and the three of us would head off for the real party. We never told him that we had other plans, but he must have known.

After one upsetting visit with Dad, my mother asked me if I had read Virginia Woolf's novel "Mrs. Dalloway." I hadn't. She told me about Clarissa Dalloway and Clarissa's acquaintance, Septimus Smith, who is mad and constantly destroys life—"makes everything terrible" as his wife, Lucrezia, says. My mother showed me the part where Septimus lolls on a bench in Regent's Park and gazes at the clouds, the leaves, and the trees that he believes are signalling to him. Then my mother looked at me and said, "You don't do that, Nicky. You don't distort things." She never completely convinced me.

I didn't talk about my father with anybody. I hoped people would assume that I just didn't have a father. I was sure that if anyone knew of my background I would be as ostracized as he was. I was also terrified that what had happened to him would be my fate as well.

I tried in every possible way to be different from my father. I felt antipathy for everything I associated with him—from the city of New York to lacrosse to womanizing. I made sure that my laugh sounded nothing like his. He urged me to read his favorite novel, Ford Madox Ford's "Parade's End," but I ignored him, feeling that, if I read it, somehow he would rub off on me. When I finally did read the book, I discovered this memorable line: "It is probably only God who can, very properly, devise the long ailings of mental oppression."

My father had manic will and drive, and when there was nothing else he could do he wrote. For a while, he concentrated on legal prose. In 1973, he merged the two great preoccupations



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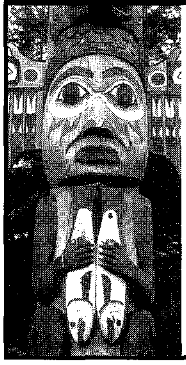

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*"I use broccoli rabe as a litmus test."*

of his life by publishing a book, "The Malpractice of Psychiatrists"; it was the first important analysis of the legal responsibilities of psychiatrists in relation to therapy, medication, hospitalization, suicide, and shock treatment. That my father could have risen from the abyss to write an accomplished legal treatise seems to me miraculous. It is a singularly detached work; nowhere is there any sign that the scholarly lawyer who is holding forth in such a disciplined way about "the utility for law of the non-scientific character of psychiatric evidence" may have been drawn to his topic through his own madness.

My father also wrote articles for law journals, letters to the editors of periodicals and newspapers, fragments of a novel about his childhood, and thousands of personal letters. While I was at college, and for years after, he wrote to me frequently, copiously, and with varying degrees of sanity. I could always tell when he was getting sick just by looking at the way he had addressed the envelope. The handwriting would shift from cursive to print letters. As his condition declined, the printed words would grow smaller; eventually, they became almost microscopic. Weeks of silence followed. Then one day an envelope from New York addressed in a booming scrawl would be waiting in the letter box, and the cycle would begin again. When he was healthy, his way with words made him witty. When he got sick, he quite literally lost his wits and the wordplay went out of control. He punned compulsively, and said things that were grandiose, lewd, bigoted, and cruel. Then he misplaced words, lost track of their meaning, forgot his own name. Finally, it all turned completely incoherent and he sputtered into collapse.

At some point, I started throwing his letters away without opening them; I have kept only a few from the hundreds that he sent me, and they are among his tamest. In late April of 1983, he wrote to me at college: "Thank you very much for inviting me to your baseball games. I have wanted many years to see you play, and I hope the weather is good." The odd thing about that letter is that there had been no invitation. I had suffered a knee injury and couldn't play baseball anymore that season. In June, he sent me a postcard. The last line was a non sequitur: "I'll have shells and sugar." I had no idea what that meant, nor did I know why my father, who usually referred to himself as Dad or Daddy, and whose name was, of course, Donald, this time signed off by writing, in a very clear hand, "Regards, Dan."

In his letters—the coherent ones—he could be just as deluded about the two of us, and even now I don't know if it was the power of love or the power of illness, or both, that made him write letters of the sort that he sent me on September 4, 1982:

> So good talking to you the other day. You sound strong, mature, and interested in me. That gives me a big thrill for I am very interested in you. You know, not every father is blessed with a son (and a daughter) who love him. Fathering a son, especially a fine young man like you, creates a special joy in a man's heart. It is not just generation, though that is important too. It is more the unspoken bond that exists. This is a rare and magical thing and I treasure it. You have always made me very happy. I am loaded with affection for you. But now to these elements is added your growing interest. It makes me feel very humble.

The surfeit of letters made it difficult to get much distance from him, but there were times when I began to believe that I was growing more relaxed. Once, I even told someone about him. My friend Ingrid and I had gone for a drive in New Hampshire; I remember exactly the grade of the hill we were climbing just outside the town of Greenfield when I finally confessed all. Afterward, I felt so pleased that she knew my secret and that she still cared about me. Years later, Ingrid told me that I'd spoken in such a cryptic way that she hadn't understood a thing I was telling her.

After college, I was offered a good job at a magazine in New York. It gave me pause to go to the city where my father lived, and I worried that I might not be able to handle it. When we got together, something always seemed to go awry. He came to a New

York Press League softball game one afternoon in Central Park, and he was thrilled when I hit a home run "for me," as he put it when I came over to him afterward. With a flourish, he pulled out a bottle of champagne and made an event out of the day. I was embarrassed; he was overdoing it. Then I realized that it was a real occasion for him: he'd finally seen me play. I walked him back to his apartment, and I noticed that something was missing. A photograph of me in my Harvard baseball uniform, which I'd presented to him a few years before on Father's Day, wasn't there. It had gone the way of everything else I ever gave him. He'd given it away to a stranger.

"He's a sick man, he can't help it, he's not himself," my grandmother would say, and I'd nod. That was always the hardest thing about having such a troubled father: because he was unwell, he wasn't accountable for anything. It was the illness talking, not him, and I had to forgive him.

What made me continue to see my father was the knowledge that what he did to me every month or two could not compare with what the cyclones inside his skull were doing to him every day. Even at those times when I was running in a panic out of the Yale Club, or lying exhausted on my bed after a gruesome telephone conversation, I thought about what it must have been like to be a young man of such intelligence, talent, and promise, and to have it all washed away; and then to confront this person formed in your own image, and to look at him beginning to make his way in the world free of the impediments that had knocked you down.

By this time, I knew that my father was always comparing us—our looks and intelligence—and I used to hate that, but in a way he was doing only what I had been doing for a very long time. My father was a negative example for me, and I formed myself in terms of him. There was an absurd element of anticipation in the way I handled my life. Through my twenties, while my friends were trying different professions, going to graduate school, having affairs, and falling in love, I was usually single. From the age of twenty-two, I kept a savings account for my future children's college education, in which

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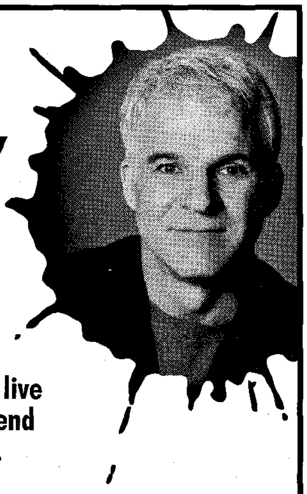

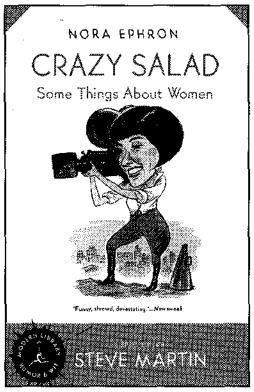

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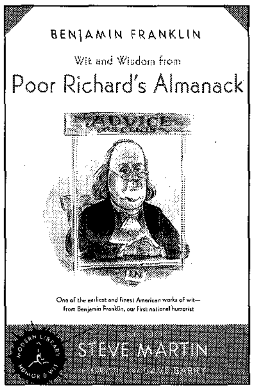

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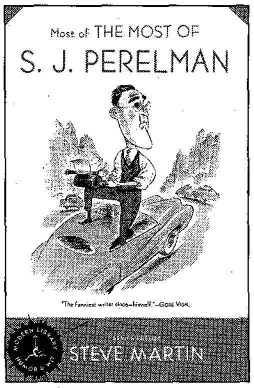

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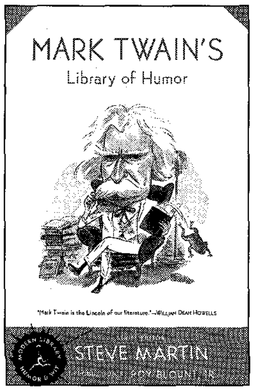

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MODERN LIBRARY HUMOR & WIT

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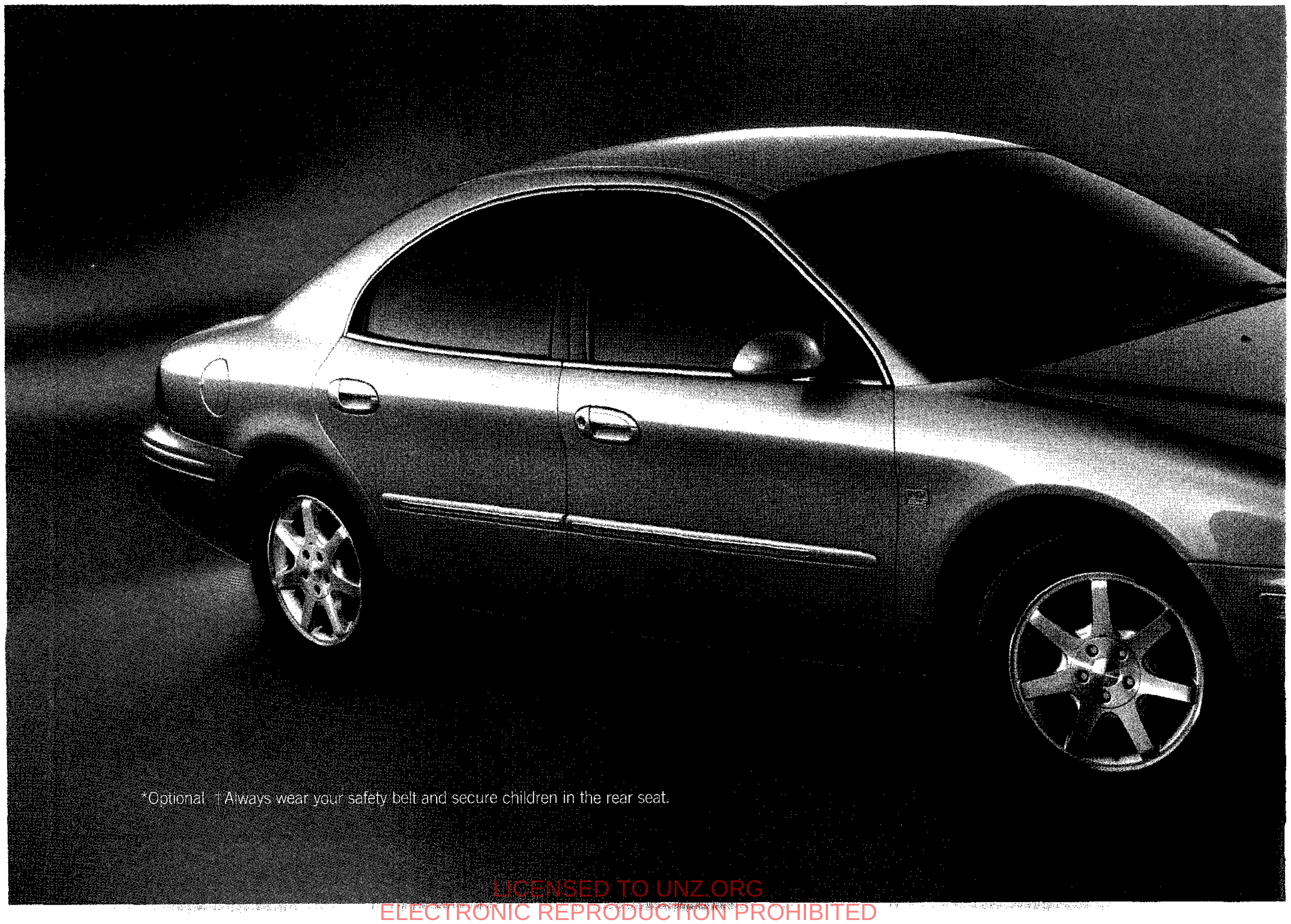
I deposited thousands of dollars. I felt I wasn't entitled to fall in love until I'd proved I could handle the long-range responsibilities that came with it. Later, when I began to have serious relationships with women, I tried to be the perfect boyfriend—generous and devoted. It never occurred to me that my self-sufficiency was making it hard for other people. A woman I went out with for a few years told me recently, "You were so loving and sweet to me, but you were always slipping out of my grasp."

In 1991, my father came to my grandmother's house for Thanksgiving. During the meal, there was a lengthy conversation about Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill. My birthday is at the end of November, and after we'd eaten our turkey my grandmother brought out a cake. My father burst into a loud chorus of "Happy Birthday." During moments of celebration, my father often wandered off into puerile or antagonistic terrain. Sure enough, instead of "Dear Nicky," he sang "Dear Stupid." His second verse concluded with a crescendo: "Stand up! Stand up! Stand up and show us your ugly face!" I rolled my eyes and blew out the candles, and we resumed our discussion until my father suddenly recalled that one of the boys my sister had dated in college was black. In a sudden fury, he glared at my sister and warned her not to marry "a nigger." Then he snarled the same instructions at me. I asked him not to talk that way. His eyes gleamed with anger and excitement. He said it again: "Listen, if you ever marry a nigger don't expect me to show up for the wedding." I got my coat and left. My father followed me out of the building, calling, in a soft, almost keening voice, "My son, my son," as I walked away.

Those turned out to be the last words he ever said to me, because after that I decided I couldn't see him anymore. I let everyone in my family know my intentions, unlisted my telephone number, and hoped for the best. At first, every time I came home I half expected to see him waiting for me in the foyer. I learned later that someone had given him my address, but he never came.

Hating my father had been as unsatisfying as loving him, but once I had made him invisible I found I could begin to admire him. The reason my father had been such a successful lacrosse player was not that he was unusually gifted; he was a plodding runner in a fast game who tried harder than the others. When the Harvard lacrosse team took showers after practice, there was always one member of the squad missing. That was Donald, out on the darkening field, running extra miles by himself.

I don't know how many breakdowns he had, how many new prescriptions he submitted to with all their devastating side effects, how many times he put all his possessions out on the curb, how many months he spent in mental hospitals, but through all of it he regained



*Optional †Always wear your safety belt and secure children in the rear seat.

his hope over and over. It had taken real courage to return to Harvard, the scene of his public breakdown, and to get through every day of his life. My father never stopped telling people how good the future was going to be. On one level, he was spinning fantasies, but on another he was merely saying that nothing was going to make him quit.

In 1995, I was told that he had been taken to the hospital for emergency open-heart surgery and that his recovery was in doubt. Family members urged me to go to him. When I hesitated, my grandmother said I was "inhuman." I didn't know what to do. Since my father hadn't been a father to me, even here I found it hard to be a son to him.

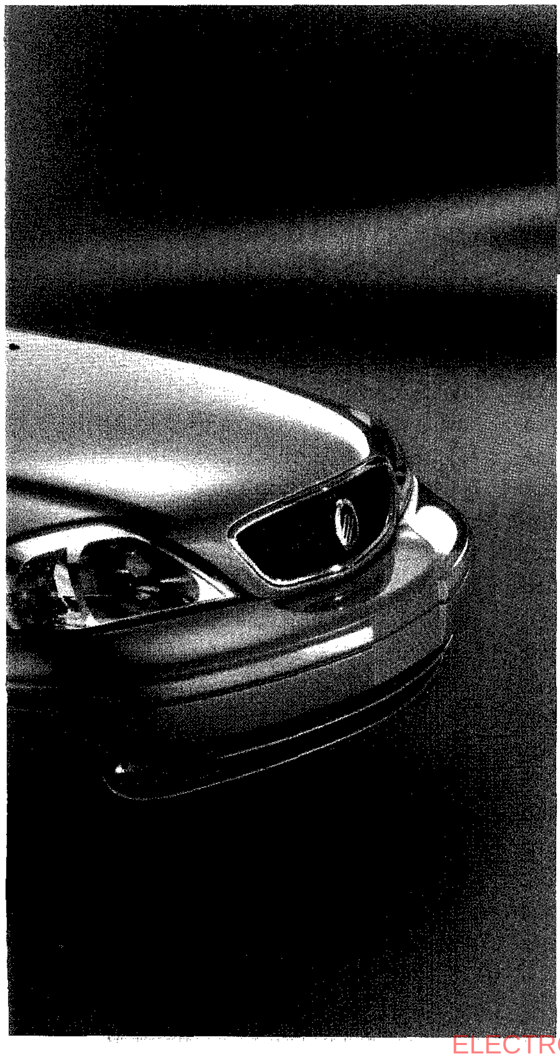
I did go. When I walked into his room, he was unconscious and heavily sedated. My sister began talking to him: "Dad, Nicky's here." His eyes opened. Through the haze they seemed to fix upon me. They looked baby-blue and hostile. I shifted my glance and spoke to the EKG monitor. "Dad, I hope you feel better," I said. When I got home, I pasted my hospital visitor's pass into my diary. I was sure he was going to die.

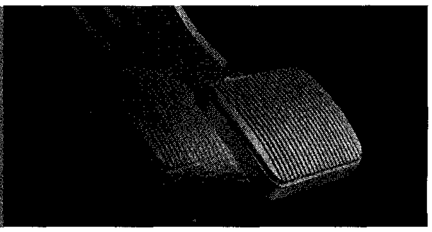
He survived, and I continued not to see him. I frequently thought about him in oblique ways: when I saw movies in which fathers and sons were central characters, I would find myself overwhelmed. Father's Day for me was like Valentine's Day for the brokenhearted. It would catch me by surprise every year, and I would slump.

On the morning of November 3, 1999, I was finishing breakfast when my sister rang my doorbell. She said, "I have something to tell you. Dad died last night." A massive heart attack had thrown him to the floor of his apartment and killed him. He was sixty-five.

We went over to my grandmother's house, where my father's sister, my Aunt Judy, sat with me on the couch. She watched me trying to be stoic, and she pulled me into a big hug and said, "Nicky, for God's sake, child, let it out." And for the first time since I left Washington in the rain, thirty-three years before, I began to sob for my lost father.

A memorial service was planned, and I knew that this would be my last chance to introduce my father to the people I love. I set out to write a eulogy that was both kind and true—that told how things really were with us. I described his struggles with mental illness and the things he hadn't been able to do. I also wanted to show that there was a way in which my father had always loved me, and I searched for a way to explain it. I kept coming back to the last eight years, when we'd lived in New York together, and how he'd let me alone. I had the sense that this was a great gesture on his part. If my father had never been what I'd wanted him to be, in the end he had found a way to take care of me. That seemed eerie, a father expressing his love for his son by avoiding him, but I believe it. ♦





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PROFILES

# THE GENOME WARRIOR

*Craig Venter has grabbed the lead in the quest for biology's Holy Grail.*

BY RICHARD PRESTON

"Craig Venter is an asshole. He's an idiot. He is a thorn in people's sides and an egomaniac," a senior scientist in the Human Genome Project said to me recently. The Human Genome Project is a nonprofit international research consortium that since the late nineteen-eighties has been working to decipher the complete sequence of nucleotides in human DNA. The human genome is the total amount of DNA that is spooled into a set of twenty-three chromosomes in the nucleus of every typical human cell. It is often referred to as the book of human life, and most scientists agree that deciphering it will be one of the great achievements of our time. The stakes, in money and glory, to say nothing of the future of medicine, are huge.

In the United States, most of the funds for the Human Genome Project come from the National Institutes of Health, and it is often referred to, in a kind of shorthand, as the "public project," to distinguish it from for-profit enterprises like the Celera Genomics Group, of which Craig Venter is the president and chief scientific officer. "In my perception," said the scientist who was giving me the dour view of Venter, "Craig has a personal vendetta against the National Institutes of Health. I look at Craig as being an extremely shallow person who is only interested in Craig Venter and in making money. Only God knows what those people at Celera are doing."

What Venter and his colleagues are doing is preparing to announce, in the next few days or weeks, that they have placed in the proper order something like ninety-five per cent of the readable letters in the human genetic code. They refer to this milestone as First Assembly. They have already started selling information about the genome to subscribers. The Human Genome Project is also on the verge of announcing a milestone: what it calls a "working draft" of the genome, which is more than ninety-per-cent complete and is available to anyone, free of charge, on a Web site called GenBank. It contains a large number of fragments that have not yet been placed in order, but scientists in the public project are scrambling to get a more complete assembly. Both images of the human genome—Celera's and the public project's—are becoming clearer and clearer. The human book of life is opening, and we hold it in our hands.

A human DNA molecule is about a metre long and a twenty-millionth of a metre wide—the width of twenty hydrogen atoms. It is shaped like a twisted ladder, and each rung of the ladder is made up of four nucleotides—adenine, thymine, cytosine, and guanine. The DNA code is expressed in combinations of the letters A, T, C, and G, the first letters of the names of the nucleotides. The human genome contains at least 3.2 billion letters of genetic code, about the number of letters in two thousand copies of "Moby Dick."

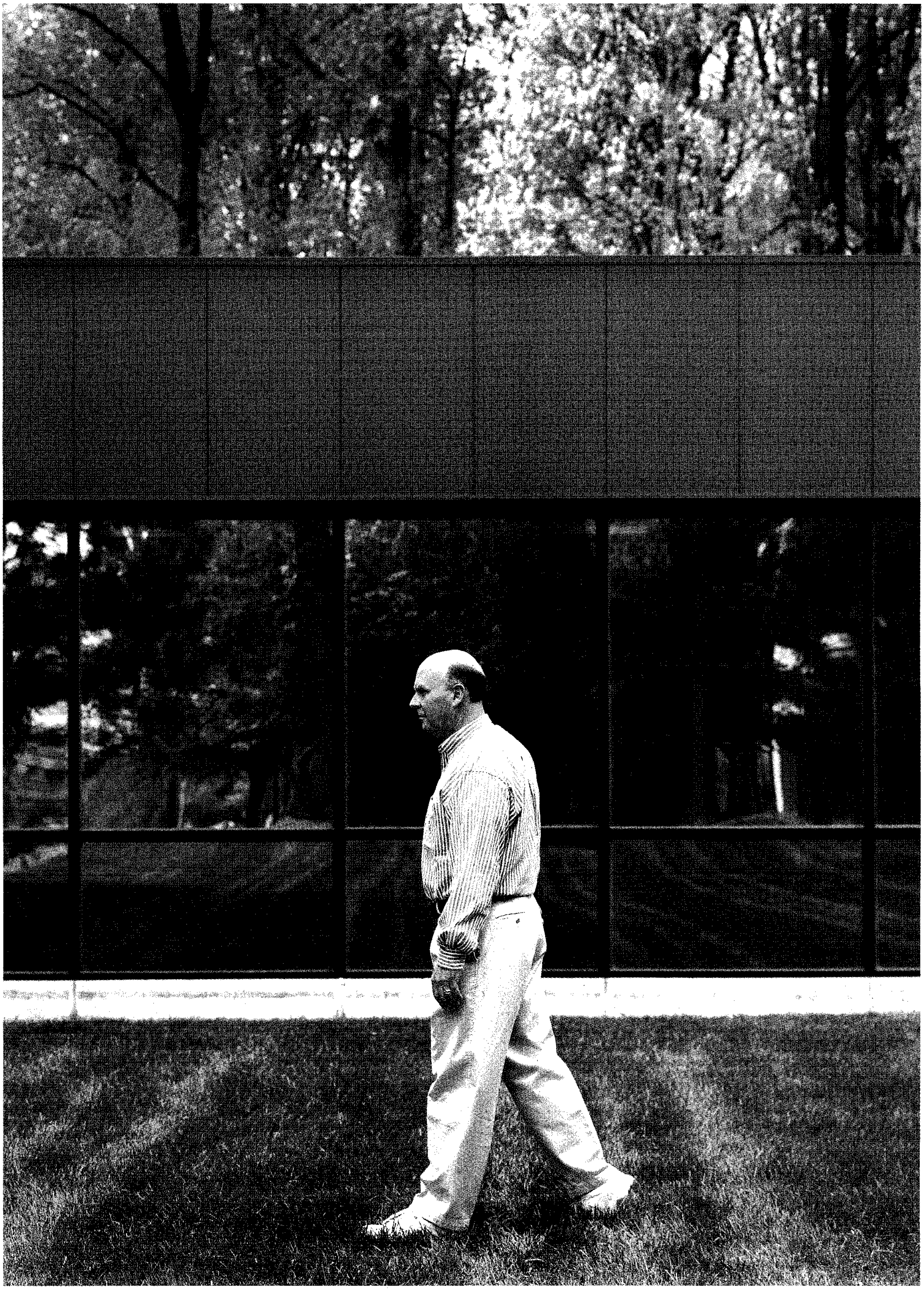
Perhaps three per cent of the human code consists of genes, which hold recipes for making proteins. Human genes are stretches of between a thousand and fifteen hundred letters of code, often broken into pieces and separated by long passages of DNA that don't code for protein. It is believed that there are somewhere between thirty thousand and possibly more than a hundred thousand genes in the human genome (there's great puzzlement about the number). Much of the rest of the genome consists of blocks of seemingly meaningless letters, gobbledygook. These sections are referred to as junk DNA, although it may be that we just don't understand the function of the apparent junk.

The conventional route for announcing scientific breakthroughs is publication in a scientific journal, and both Celera and the public project plan to publish annotated versions of the human genome later this year, perhaps in *Science*. It is even possible that they will announce a collaboration and publish together. Although right now the two sides look like armies maneuvering for advantage, the leaders of the Human Genome Project have consistently denied that they are involved in some kind of competition.

"They're trying to say it's not a race, right?" Craig Venter said to me recently, in a shrugging sort of way. "But if two sailboats are sailing near each other, then by definition it's a race. If one boat wins, then the winner says, 'We smoked them,' and the loser says, 'We weren't racing—we were just cruising.'"

I first met Craig Venter on a windy day in summer nearly a year ago, at Celera's headquarters in Rockville, Maryland, a half-hour drive northwest of Washington, D.C. The company's offices and laboratories occupy a pair of five-story white buildings with mirrored windows, surrounded by beautiful groves of red oaks and tulip-poplar trees. One of the buildings contains rooms packed with row after row of DNA-sequencing machines of a type known as the ABI Prism 3700. The other building holds what is said to be the most powerful civilian computer array in the world; it is surpassed only, perhaps, by that of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, which is used for simulating nuclear bomb explosions. This second building also contains the Command Center, a room stuffed with control consoles and computer screens. People in the Command Center monitor the flow of DNA inside Celera. The DNA flows through the Prism machines twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

That day last summer, Venter moved restlessly around his office. There had been a spate of newspaper stories about the race to decode the complete genome, and about the pressure Celera was putting on its competitors. "We're scaring



*Craig Venter, the president of Celera Genomics, at company headquarters in Rockville, Maryland. Photograph by Jason Schmidt.*

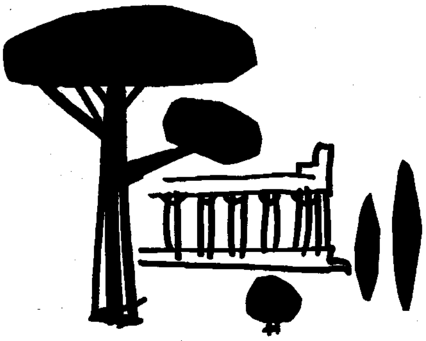
the shit out of everybody, including ourselves," he said to me. Venter is fifty-three years old, and he has an active, cherubic face on which a smile often flickers and plays. He is bald, with a fuzz of short hair at the temples, and his head is usually sunburned. He has bright-blue eyes and a soft voice. He was wearing khaki slacks and a blue shirt, New Balance running shoes, a preppy tie with small turtles on it, and a Rolex watch. Venter's office looks into the trees, and that day leaves were spinning on branches outside the windows, flashing their white undersides and promising rain. Beyond the trees, a chronic traffic jam was occurring on the Rockville Pike. Celera is in an area along a stretch of Interstate 270 known as the Biotechnology Corridor, which is dense with companies specializing in the life sciences.

Celera Genomics is a part of the P.E. Corporation, which was called Perkin-Elmer before the company's chief executive, Tony L. White, split the business into two parts: P.E. Biosystems, which makes the Prism machine, and Celera. Venter owns five per cent of Celera's stock, which trades, often violently, on the New York Stock Exchange. In recent months, the stock has been tossed by waves of panic selling and panic buying. Currently, the company is valued at three billion dollars, more or less. At times, Craig Venter's net worth has slopped around by a hundred million dollars a day, like water going back and forth in a bathtub.

"Our fundamental business model is like Bloomberg's," Venter said. "We're selling information about the vast universe of molecular medicine." Venter believes, for example, that one day Celera will help analyze the genomes of millions of people as a regular part of its business—this will be done over the Internet, he says—and the company will then help design or select drugs tailored to patients' particular needs. Genomics is moving so fast that it is possible to think that in perhaps fifteen years you will be able to walk into a doctor's office and have your own genome interpreted. It could be stored in a smart card. (You would want to keep the card in your wallet, in case you landed in an emergency room.) Doctors would read the smart card, and it would show a patient's total biological-software code. They could see the bugs in the code, the genes that make you vulnerable to certain diseases. Everyone has bugs in his code, and knowing what they are will become a key to diagnosis and treatment. If you became sick, doctors could watch the activity of your genes, using so-called gene chips, which are small pieces of glass containing detectors for every gene. Doctors could track how the body was responding to treatment. All your genes could be observed, operating in an immense symphony.

Venter stopped moving briefly, and sat down in front of a screen and tapped a keyboard. A Yahoo! quote came up. "Hey, we're over twenty today," he said. (Celera's stock has since split. Adjusted for today's prices, it was trading at ten dollars a share; last week, it was trading at around seventy dollars a share.) I was standing in front of a large model of Venter's yacht, the Sorcerer, in which he won the 1997 Trans-Atlantic Race in an upset victory—it was the only major ocean race that Venter had ever entered. "I got the boat for a bargain from the guy who founded Land's End," Venter said. "I like to buy castoff things on the cheap from ultra-rich people."

Venter went into the hallway, and I followed him. Celera was renovating its space, and tiles were hanging from the ceiling. Some had fallen to the floor. Black stains dripped out of air-conditioning vents, and sheets of plywood were lying around. Workmen were Sheetrocking walls, ripping up carpet, and installing light fixtures, and a smell of paint and spackle drifted in the air. We took the stairs to the basement and entered a room that held about fifty ABI Prism 3700 machines. Each Prism was the size of a small refrigerator and had cost three hundred thousand dollars. Prisms are the fastest DNA sequencers on earth. At the moment, they were reading the DNA of the fruit fly. This was a pilot project for the human genome. The machines contained lasers. Heat from the lasers seemed to ripple from the machines, even though they were being cooled by a circulation system that drew air through them. The lasers were shining light on tiny tubes through which strands of fruit-fly DNA were moving, and the light was passing through the DNA, and sensors were reading the letters of the code. Each machine had a computer screen on which blocks of numbers and letters were scrolling past. It was fly code.



"You're looking at the third-largest DNA-sequencing facility in the world," Venter said. "We also have the second-largest and the largest."

We got into an elevator. The walls of the elevator were dented and bashed. Venter led me into a vast, low-ceilinged room that looked out into the trees. This was the largest DNA-decoding factory on earth. The room contained a hundred and fifty Prisms—forty-five million dollars' worth of the machines—and more Prisms were due to be installed any day. Air ducts dangled on straps from the ceiling, and one wall consisted of gypsum board.

Venter moved restlessly through the unfinished space. "You know, this is the most futuristic manufacturing plant on the planet right now," he said. Outdoors, the rain came, splattering on the windows, and the poplar leaves shivered. We stopped and looked over a sea of machines. "You're seeing Henry Ford's first assembly plant," he said. "What don't you see? People, right? There are three people working in this room. A year ago, this work would have taken one thousand to two thousand scientists. With this technology, we are literally coming out of the dark ages of biology. As a civilization, we know far less than one per cent of what will be known about biology, human physiology, and medicine. My view of biology is 'We don't know shit.'"

Celera's business model provokes some interesting questions, and some observers believe the company could fail. For instance, it appears to be burning through at least a hundred and fifty million dollars a year. But who will want to buy the information the company is generating, and how much will they pay for it? "There will be an incredible demand for genomic information," Venter assured me. "When the first electric-power companies strung up wires on power poles, there were a lot of skeptics. They said, 'Who's going to buy all that electricity?' We already have more than a hundred million dollars in committed subscription revenues over five years from companies that are buying genomic information from us—Amgen, Novartis, Pharmacia & Upjohn, and others. After we finish the human genome, we'll do the mouse, rice, rat, dog, cow, corn, maybe apple trees, maybe clover. We'll do the chimpanzee."

"When I grow up, I want to work with the affluent."

• •

One day at Celera's headquarters, I was talking with a molecular biologist named Hamilton O. Smith, who won a Nobel Prize in 1978 as the co-discoverer of restriction enzymes, which are used to cut DNA in specific places. Scientists use the enzymes like scissors, chopping up pieces of DNA so that they can be studied or recombined with the DNA of other organisms. Without the means to do this, there would be no such thing as genetic engineering.

Ham Smith is in his late sixties. He is six feet five inches tall, with a shock of stiff white hair and a modest manner. "Have you ever seen human DNA?" he asked me, as he poked around his lab.

"No."

"It's beautiful stuff."

A box that held four small plastic tubes, each the size of a pencil stub, sat on a countertop. "These four tubes hold enough human DNA to do the entire human-genome project," Smith said. "There's a couple of drops of liquid in each tube."

He held up one of the tubes and turned it over in the light to show me. A droplet of clear liquid moved back and forth. It was the size of a dewdrop. Then he held up a glass vial, and rocked it back and forth, and a crystal-clear, syrupy liquid oozed around in it. He explained that this was DNA he'd extracted from human blood—from white cells. "That's long, unbroken DNA. This liquid looks glassy and clear, but it's snotty. It's like sugar syrup. It really is a sugar syrup, because there are sugars in the backbone of the DNA molecule."

Smith picked up a pipet—a hand-held device with a hollow plastic needle in it, which is used for moving tiny quantities of liquid from one place to another. His hands are large, but they moved with precision. Holding the pipet, he sucked up a droplet of DNA mixed with a type of purified salt water called buffer. He held the drop in the pipet for a moment, then let it go. The droplet drooled. It reminded me of a spider dropping down a silk thread.

"There the DNA goes, it's stringing," he said. "The pure stuff is gorgeous." The molecules were sliding along one another, like spaghetti falling out of a pot, causing the water to string out. "It's absolutely glassy clear, without color," he said. "Sometimes it pulls back into the tube and won't come out. I guess that's like snot, too, and then you have to almost cut it with scissors. The molecule is actually quite stiff. It's like a plumber's snake. It bends, but only so much, and then it breaks. It's brittle. You can break it just by stirring it."

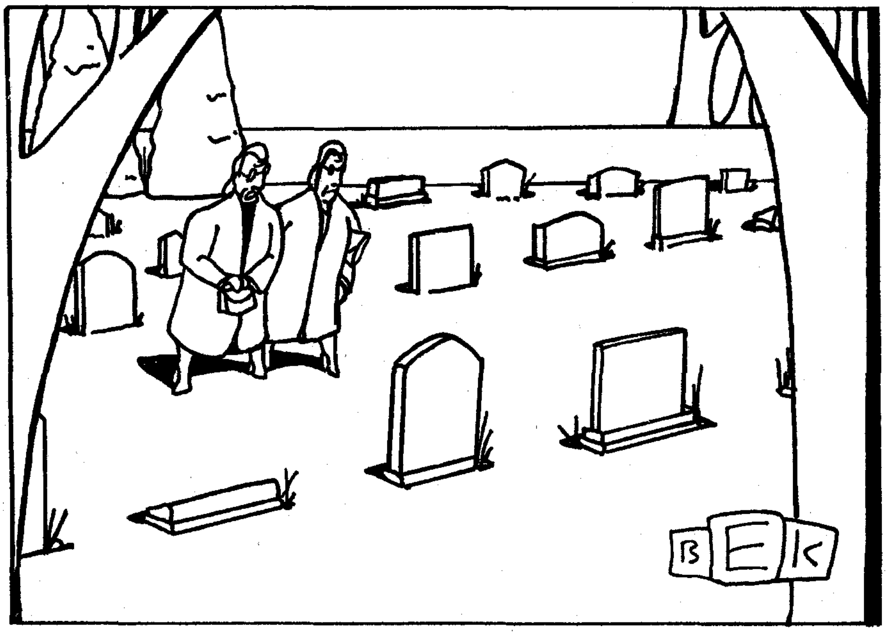
The samples of DNA that Celera is using are kept in a freezer near Smith's office. When he wants to get some human DNA, he removes a vial of frozen white blood cells or sperm from the freezer. The vials have coded labels. He thaws the sample of cells or sperm, then mixes the material with salt water, along with a little bit of detergent. A typical human cell looks like a fried egg, and the nucleus of the cell resembles the yolk. The detergent pops the eggs and the yolks, and strands of DNA spill out in the salt water. The debris falls to the bottom, leaving tangles of DNA suspended in the liquid.

One of Smith's research associates, a woman named Cindi Pfannkoch, showed me what shattered DNA was like. Using a pipet, she drew a tiny amount of liquid from a tube and let a drop go on a sheet of wax, where it beaded up like a tiny jewel, the size of the dot over this "i." An ant could have drunk it in full.

"There are two hundred million fragments of human DNA in this drop," she said. "We call that a DNA library."

She opened a plastic bottle, revealing a white fluff. "Here's some dried DNA." She took up a pair of tweezers and dragged out some of the fluff. It was a wad of dried DNA from the thymus gland of a calf; the wad was about the size of a cotton ball, and it contained several million miles of DNA.

"In theory," Ham Smith said, "you



*"He did it my way."*

could rebuild the entire calf from any bit of that fluff."

I placed some of the DNA on the ends of my fingers and rubbed them together. The stuff was sticky. It began to dissolve on my skin. "It's melting—like cotton candy," I said.

"Sure. That's the sugar in DNA," Smith said.

"Would it taste sweet?"

"No. DNA is an acid, and it's got salts in it. Actually, I've never tasted it."

Later, I got some dried calf DNA. I placed a bit of the fluff on my tongue. It melted into a gluey ooze that stuck to the roof of my mouth in a blob. The blob felt slippery on my tongue, and the taste of pure DNA appeared. It had a soft taste, unsweet, rather bland, with a touch of acid and a hint of salt. Perhaps like the earth's primordial sea. It faded away.

DNA from six donors who contributed their blood or semen was used for Celera's human-genome project. The donors included both men and women, and a variety of ethnic groups. Just one person, a man, supplied the DNA for First Assembly. Only Craig Venter and one other person at the company are said to know who the donors are. "I don't know who they are, but I wouldn't be surprised if one of them is Craig," Ham Smith remarked.

• •

Craig Venter grew up in a working-class neighborhood on the east side of Millbrae, on the San Francisco peninsula. His family's house was near the railroad tracks. One of his favorite childhood activities, he says, was to play chicken on the tracks. In high school, he excelled in science and shop. He built two speed boats, and spent a lot of time surfing Half Moon Bay. He attended two junior colleges in a desultory way, but mostly he surfed, until he enlisted in the Navy. He had long blond hair and a crisp body then. He was a medical corpsman in Vietnam, and twice he was sentenced to the brig for disobeying orders.

Venter has a history of confrontation with government authorities. He told me that as an enlisted man in San Diego he was court-martialled for refusing a direct order given by an officer. "She happened to be a woman I was dating," Venter said. "We had a spat, and she ordered me to cut my hair. I refused." A friend of his, Ron Nadel, who was a doctor in Vietnam, recalls that one of Venter's blowups with authority involved "telling a superior officer to do something that was anatomically impossible." Venter worked for a year in the intensive-care ward at Da Nang hospital, where, he calculates, more than a thousand Vietnamese and American soldiers died during his shifts, many of them while the 1968 Tet offensive was going on. When he returned to the United States, Venter finished college and then earned a Ph.D. in physiology and pharmacology from the University of California at San Diego.

Venter is married to a molecular biologist, Claire Fraser, who is the president of The Institute for Genomic Research (TIGR, pronounced "Tiger"), in Rockville, a nonprofit institute that he and Fraser helped establish in 1992. In 1998, he endowed TIGR with half of his original stake in Celera—five per cent of the company. The gift is currently worth about a hundred and fifty million dollars, and it will be used to analyze the genomes of microbes that cause malaria and cholera and other diseases.

A few years ago, Venter developed a hole in his intestine, due to diverticulitis. He collapsed after giving a speech, and nearly died. He is fine now, but he blames stress caused by his enemies for his burst intestine. Venter has enemies of the first water. They are brilliant, famous, articulate, and regularly angry. At times, Venter seems to thrive on his enemies' indignation with an indifferent grace, like a surfer shooting a tubular wave, letting himself be propelled through their cresting wrath. At other times, he seems baffled, and says he can't understand why they don't like him.

One of Venter's most venerable enemies is James Watson, who, with Francis Crick and Maurice Wilkins, won the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1962 for discovering the shape of the DNA molecule—what they called the double helix. Watson helped found the Human Genome Project, and he was the first head of the N.I.H. genome program. I visited him in his office at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, on Long Island. The office is panelled in blond oak and has a magnificent eastward view across Cold Spring Harbor. Watson is now in his seventies. He has a narrow face, lopsided teeth, a frizz of white hair, sharp, restless eyes, a squint, and a dreamy way of speaking in sentences that trail off. He put his hands on his head and squinted at me. "In 1953, with our first paper on DNA, we never saw the possibility . . . " he said. He looked away, up at the walls. "No chemist ever thought we could read the molecule." But a number of biologists began to think that reading the human genome might just be possible, and by the mid-nineteen-eighties Watson had become convinced that the decryption of the genome was an important goal and should be pursued, even if it cost billions and took decades.

Watson appeared before Congress in May of 1987 and asked for an initial annual budget of thirty million dollars for the project. The original plan was to sequence the human genome by 2005, at a projected cost of about three billion dollars. The principal work of the project is now carried out by five major DNA-sequencing centers, as well as by a number of smaller centers around the world—all academic, nonprofit labs. The big centers include one at Baylor University in Texas, one at Washington University in St. Louis, the Whitehead Institute at M.I.T., the Joint Genome Institute of the Department of Energy, and the Sanger Centre, near Cambridge, England. The Wellcome Trust of Great Britain—the largest nonprofit medical-research foundation in the world—is funding the Sanger work, which is to sequence a third of the human genome. One of the founding principles of the Human Genome Project was the immediate release of all the human code that was found, making it available free of charge and without any restrictions on who could use it or what anyone could do with it.

In 1984, Craig Venter had begun working at the N.I.H., where he eventually developed an unorthodox strategy for decoding bits of genes. At the time, other scientists were painstakingly reading the complete sequence of each gene they studied. This process seemed frustratingly slow to Venter. He began isolating what are called expressed sequence tags, or E.S.T.s, which are fragments of DNA at the ends of genes. When the E.S.T.s were isolated, they could be used to identify genes in a rough way. With the help of a few sequencing machines, Venter identified bits of thousands of human genes. This was a source of unease at the N.I.H., because it was a kind of skimming rather than a complete reading of genes. Venter published his method in 1991 in an article in *Science*, along with partial sequences from about three hundred and fifty human genes. The method was not received well by many genomic scientists. It was fast, easy, and powerful, but it didn't look elegant, and some scientists seemed threatened by it. Venter claims that two of his colleagues, who are now heads of public genome centers, asked him not to publish his method or move forward with it for fear they would lose their funding for genome sequencing.

The N.I.H. decided to apply for patents on the gene fragments that Venter had identified. James Watson blew his stack over the idea of anyone trying to patent bits of genes, and he got into a hostile situation with the director of the N.I.H., Bernadine Healy, who defended the patenting effort. In July of 1991, during a meeting in Washington called by Senator Pete Domenici, of New Mexico, to review the genome program, Watson dissed Venter's methods. "It isn't science," he said, adding that the machines "could be run by monkeys."

It was a strange moment. The Senate hearing room was almost empty—few politicians were interested in genes then. But Craig Venter was sitting in the room. "Jim Watson was clearly referring to Craig as a monkey in front of a U.S. senator," another scientist who was there said to me. "He portrayed Craig as the village idiot of genomics." Venter seemed to almost thrash in his chair, stung by Watson's words. "Watson was the ideal father figure of genomics," Venter says. "And he was attacking me in the Senate, when I was relatively young and new in the field."

Today, James Watson insists that he wasn't comparing Craig Venter to a monkey. "It's the patenting of genes I was objecting to. That's why I used the word 'monkey'! I hate it!" he said to me. The patent office turned down the N.I.H.'s application, but a few years later, two genomics companies, Incyte and Human Genome Sciences, adopted the E.S.T. method for finding genes, and it became the foundation of their businesses—currently worth, combined, about seven billion dollars on the stock market. Incyte and Human Genome Sciences are Celera's main business competitors. Samuel Broder, the chief medical officer at Celera, who is a former director of the National Cancer Institute, said to me, heatedly, "None of the people who severely and acrimoniously criticized Craig for his E.S.T. method ever said they were personally sorry. They ostracized Craig and then went on to use his method with never an acknowledgment."

James Watson now says, "The E.S.T. method has proved immensely useful, and it should have been encouraged."

Venter was increasingly unhappy at the N.I.H. He had received a ten-million-dollar grant to sequence human DNA, and he asked for permission to use some of the money to do E.S.T. se-

*"You just self-deprecated yourself right out of a job."*

quencing, but his request was denied by the genome project. Venter returned the grant money with what he says was a scathing letter to Watson. In addition, Claire Fraser had been denied tenure at the N.I.H. Her review committee (which was composed entirely of middle-aged men) explained to her that it could not evaluate her work independently of her husband's. At the time, Fraser and Venter had separate labs and separate research programs. Fraser considered suing the N.I.H. for sex discrimination.

Watson was forced to resign as head of the genome project in April of 1992, in part because of the dispute over patenting Craig Venter's work. That summer, Venter was approached by a venture capitalist named Wallace Steinberg, who wanted to set up a company that would use Venter's E.S.T. method to discover genes, create new drugs, and make money. "I didn't want to run a company, I wanted to keep doing basic research," Venter says. But Steinberg offered Venter a research budget of seventy million dollars over ten years—a huge amount of money, then, for biotech. Venter, along with Claire Fraser and a number of colleagues, left the N.I.H. and founded TIGR, which is a nonprofit organization. At the same time, Steinberg established a for-profit company, Human Genome Sciences, to exploit and commercialize the work of TIGR, which was required to license its discoveries exclusively to its sister company. Thus Venter got millions of dollars for research, but he had to hand his discoveries over to Human Genome Sciences for commercial development. Venter had one foot in the world of pure science and one foot in a bucket of money.

By 1994, the Human Genome Project was mapping the genomes of model organisms, which included the fruit fly, the roundworm, yeast, and *E. coli* (the organism that lives in the human gut), but no genome of any organism had been completed, except virus genomes, which are relatively small. Venter and Hamilton O. Smith (who was then at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine) proposed speeding things up by using a technique known as whole-genome shotgun sequencing. In shotgunning, the genome is broken into small, random, overlapping pieces, and each piece is sequenced, or read. Then the jumble of pieces is reassembled in a computer that compares each piece to every other piece and matches the overlaps, thus assembling the whole genome.

Venter and Smith applied for a grant from the N.I.H. to shotgun-sequence the genome of a disease-causing bacterium called *H. influenzae*, or H. flu for short. It causes fatal meningitis in children. They proposed to do it in just a year. H. flu has 1.8 million letters of code, which seemed massive then (though the human code is two thousand times as long). The review panel at the N.I.H. gave Venter's proposal a low score, essentially rejecting it. According to Venter, the panel claimed that an attempt to shotgun-sequence a whole microbe was excessively risky and perhaps impossible. He appealed. The appeals process dragged on, and he went about shotgunning H. flu anyway. Venter and the TIGR team had nearly finished sequencing the H. flu genome when, in early 1995, a letter arrived at TIGR saying that the appeals committee had denied the grant on the ground that the experiment wasn't feasible. Venter published the H. flu genome a few months later in *Science*. Whole-genome shotgunning had worked. This was the first completed genome of a free-living organism.

It seems quite possible that Venter's grant was denied because of politics. The review panel seems to have hated the idea of giving N.I.H. money to TIGR to make discoveries that would be turned over to a corporation, Human Genome Sciences. It turned down the grant, in spite of the fact that "all the smart people knew the method was straightforward and would work," Eric Lander, the head of the genome center at M.I.T. and one of the leaders of the public project, said to me.

Around this time, Wallace Steinberg died of a heart attack, and his death provided a catalyst for a split between TIGR and Human Genome Sciences, which was run by a former AIDS researcher, William Haseltine. Venter and Haseltine were widely known to dislike each other. Venter sold his stock in Human Genome Sciences because of the rift between them, and after Steinberg died the relationship between the two organizations was formally ended.

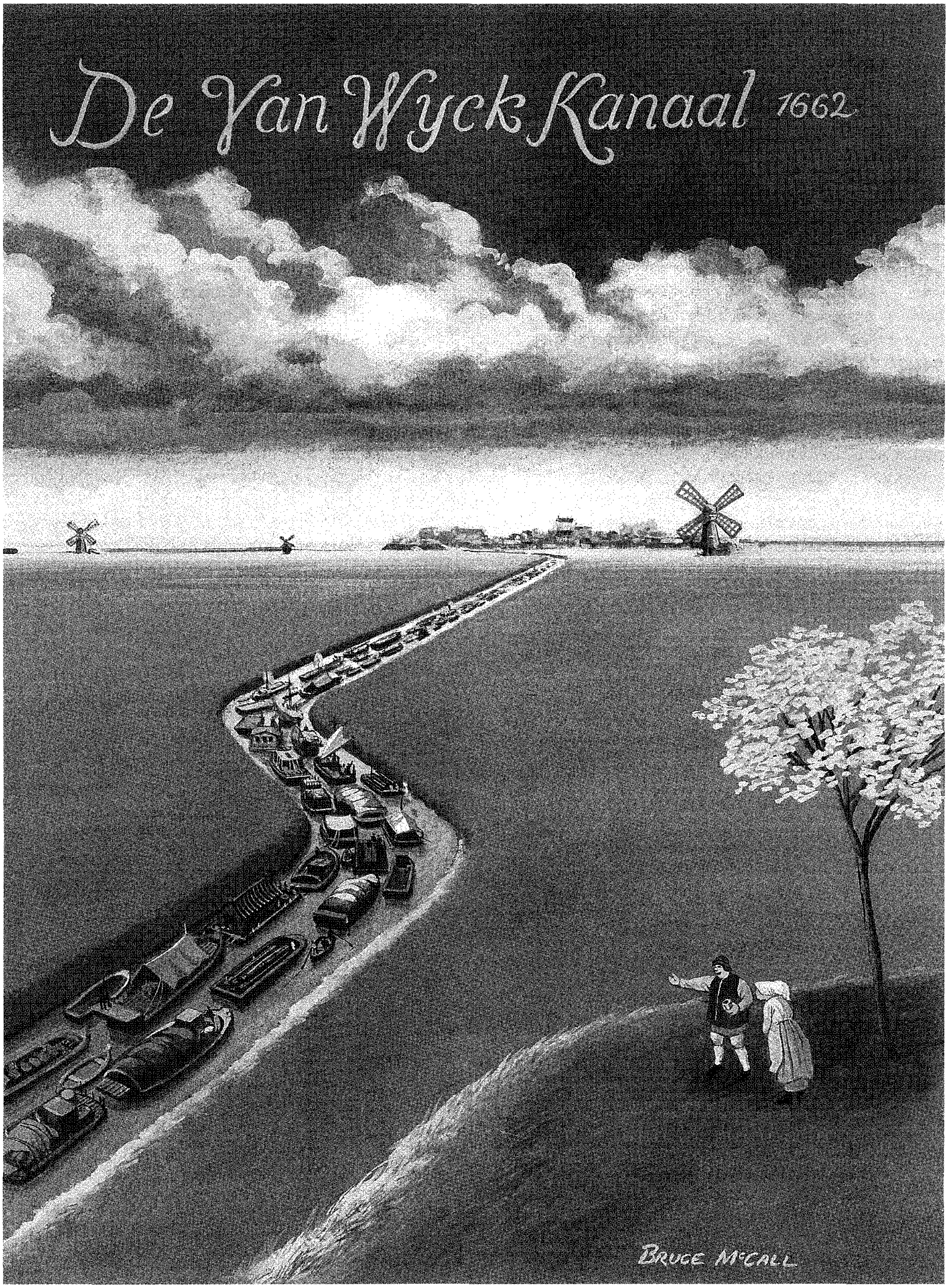
Late in 1997, TIGR was doing some DNA sequencing for the Human Genome Project, and Venter began going to some of the project's meetings. That was when he started calling the heads of the public project's DNA-sequencing centers the Liars' Club, claiming that their predictions about when they would finish a task and how much it would cost were false. This did not win Venter many friends. But he seemed to have a point.

Francis Collins, a distinguished medical geneticist from the University of Michigan, had become the head of the N.I.H. genome program shortly after James Watson resigned in 1992. In early January, 1998, an internal budget projection from Collins's office somehow found its way to Watson (he seems to find out everything that's happening in molecular biology). This budget projection—it is not clear whether it was formal or was just an unofficial projection—was a document about eight pages long. It contained a graph marked "Confidential" indicating that Collins planned to spend only sixty million dollars per year on direct human-DNA sequencing through 2005. It also predicted that by that year—when the human genome was supposed to be completed—only 1.6 billion to 1.9 billion letters of human code would be sequenced; that is, slightly more than half of the human genome.

This upset Watson, and he decided to discuss it with Eric Lander. On January 17th, Watson travelled to Rockefeller University, on the East Side of Manhattan, where Lander was giving the prestigious Harvey Lecture. The two men met after the lecture at the faculty club at Rockefeller. They were dressed in black tie and were somewhat inebriated. Traditionally among medical people, the Harvey Lecture is given and listened to under the influence.

The Rockefeller faculty club overlooks a lawn and sycamore trees and the traffic of York Avenue. Watson and Lander sat down with cognacs at a small table in a dim corner of the room, on the far side of a pool table, where they could talk without being overheard. Also present and drinking cognac was a biologist named Norton Zinder, who is one of Watson's best friends. Zinder, like Watson, is a founder of the Human Genome Project. One of the older men brought up the confidential budget document with Lander, and both of them began to press him about it. They felt that it provided evidence that Collins did not in-

EASEL BY BRUCE McCALL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tend to spend more than sixty million dollars a year on human-DNA sequencing—nowhere near enough to get the job done, they felt.

Watson evidently felt that Lander had influence with Francis Collins, and he urged him to try to persuade Collins to spend more on direct sequencing of human DNA, and to twist Congress's arm for more money.

Norton Zinder was somewhat impaired with cocktails. "This thing is potchkeeing along, going nowhere!" he said, hammering the little table and waving his arms as he spoke. For him, the issue was simple: he had had a quadruple coronary bypass, and he had been receiving treatments for cancer, and now he was afraid he would not live to see the deciphering of the human genome. This was intolerable. The human genome had begun to seem like a vision of Canaan to Norton Zinder, and he thought he wouldn't make it there.

Eric Lander did not view things the way the older biologists did. In his opinion, the problem was organizational. The Human Genome Project was "too bloody complicated, with too many groups." He felt the real problem was a lack of focus. He wanted the project to create a small, élite group that would do the major sequencing of human DNA—shock cavalry that would lead a charge into the human genome. Implicitly, he thought its leader should be Eric Lander.

The three men downed their cognacs with a sense of frustration. "I had essentially given up seeing the human genome in my lifetime," Zinder says.

At about the same moment that Watson and his friends were lamenting the slowness of the public project, the Perkin-Elmer Corporation, which was a manufacturer of lab instruments, was secretly talking about a corporate reorganization. It controlled more than ninety per cent of the market for DNA-sequencing equipment, and it was developing the ABI Prism 3700. The Prism was then only a prototype sitting in pieces in a laboratory in Foster City, California, but already it looked as if it were going to be at least ten times faster than any other DNA-sequencing machine. Perkin-Elmer executives began to wonder just what it could do. One day Michael Hunkapillar, who was then the head of the company's instrument division, got out a pocket calculator and estimated that several hundred Prisms could whip through a molecule of human DNA in a few weeks, although only in a rough way. To fill in the gaps—places where the DNA code came out garbled or wasn't read properly by the machines—it would be necessary to sequence the molecule again and again. This is known as repeat sequencing, or manyfold coverage, and might take a few years. Hunkapillar persuaded the chief executive of Perkin-Elmer, Tony White, to restructure the business and create a genomics company.

In December, 1997, executives from Perkin-Elmer began telephoning Venter to see if he'd be interested in running the new company. He blew them off at first, but in early February, 1998, he went to California with a colleague, Mark Adams, to look at the prototype Prism. When they saw it, they immediately un-

BROOKFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
LANDMARK
THE CAPTAIN BENJAMIN INGHAM HOUSE
BUILT IN 1798
FOR $550 AND 2 TONS OF CODFISH
PRESENT WORTH
$3.5 MILLION, BUT COULD EASILY BRING
$5 MILLION
KOREN

derstood its significance. Before the end of that day, Venter, Adams, and Hunkapillar had laid out a plan for decoding the human genome. A month later, Norton Zinder, Watson's friend, flew to California to see the machine. "It was just a piece of equipment sitting on a table, but I said, 'That's it! We've got the genome!' " he recalled. Zinder joined Celera as a member of its board of advisers, and received stock in the company, which has considerably enriched him. ("The chemists have been cleaning up," he said to me. "Now biologists have their hands on the money, too.") Zinder and Watson have maintained their friendship but have agreed not to speak about Celera with each other. They evidently fear that one or both of them could have a stroke arguing about Craig Venter.

At eleven o'clock in the morning on May 8, 1998, Craig Venter and Mike Hunkapillar walked into the office of Harold Varmus, who was then the director of the N.I.H., and announced the pending formation of a corporation, led by Venter, that was going to decode the human genome. (Celera did not yet have a name.) They proposed to Varmus that the company and the public project collaborate, sharing their data and—this point is enormously important to scientists—sharing the publication of the human genome, which meant sharing the credit and the glory for having done the work, including the unspoken possibility of a Nobel Prize. Varmus strongly suspected that this wasn't a sincere offer, and he told them that he needed time, particularly to check with Francis Collins. Later that same day, Venter and Hunkapillar drove to Dulles Airport, where they met Collins at the United Airlines Red Carpet Club, and again offered collaboration. Venter recalls that Collins seemed upset. Collins recalls that he merely asked Venter for time to consider the offer. Time was one thing Venter was not prepared to give.

Venter had alerted the New York *Times* to the story about the creation of the new company, and just an hour or so after the meeting with Collins he called the *Times* and told the paper it should run it. In the story, Venter announced that he would sequence the human genome by 2001—four years ahead of the public project—and he would do it, he claimed, for between a hundred and fifty and two hundred million dollars—less than a tenth of the projected cost of the public project. The *Times* reporter, Nicholas Wade, implied that the Human Genome Project might not meet its goals and might be superfluous.

Four days later, on May 12th, Venter and Hunkapillar went to the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, where a meeting of the heads of the Human Genome Project was taking place. Venter got up and told them, in effect, that they could stop working, since he was going to sequence the human genome *tout de suite*. Later that week, sitting beside Varmus and Collins at a press conference, Venter looked out at a room full of reporters and suggested that biology and society would be better off if the Human Genome Project shifted gears and moved forward to do the genome of the . . . mouse.

It was a fart in church of magnitude nine. "The mouse is essential for interpreting the human genome," Venter tried to explain, but that didn't help. In the words of one head of a sequencing center who was at the Cold Spring Harbor meeting, "Craig has a certain lack of social skills. He goes into that meeting thinking everyone is going to thank him for doing the human genome himself. The thing blew up into a huge explosion." The head of another center recalled, "Craig came up to me afterward, and he said, 'Ha, ha, I'm going to do the human genome. You should go do the mouse.' I said to him, 'You bastard. You *bastard*,' and I almost slugged him."

They felt that Venter was trying to stake out the human genome for himself as a financial asset while at the same time stealing the scientific credit. They felt that he was belittling their work. Venter said that he would make the genome available to the public but would charge customers who wanted to see and work with Celera's analyzed data.

James Watson was furious. He did not like the idea of having to pay money to Craig Venter for anything. Watson did not attend Venter's presentation, but he appeared in the lobby afterward, where he repeatedly said to people, "He's Hitler. This should not be Munich." To Francis Collins he said, "Are you going to be Churchill or Chamberlain?"

Venter left the meeting soon afterward, and he and Watson have exchanged only chilly greetings since.

The British leaders of the public project—John Sulston, the director of the Sanger Centre, and Michael Morgan, of the Wellcome Trust—reacted swiftly to Venter's announcement. They were in England, but they flew to the United States, and the next day arrived at Cold Spring Harbor, where they found things in disarray, if not in fibrillation, with scientists wondering if the Human Genome Project was about to die. To a standing ovation, Michael Morgan got up and read a Churchillian statement declaring that the Wellcome Trust would nearly double its funding for the public project, and would decode a full third of the human genome, and would challenge any "opportunistic" patents of the genome. "We were reacting, in part, to Craig's suggestion that we just close up shop and go home," Morgan says now.

Venter also announced that Celera would use the whole-genome shotgun method. The public project was using a more conventional method. John Sulston and Robert Waterston, the head of the sequencing center at Washington University, published a letter in *Science* asserting that Venter's method would be "woefully inadequate." Francis Collins was quoted in *USA Today* as saying that Celera was going to produce "the Cliffs Notes or the Mad Magazine version" of the human genome. Collins says now that his words were taken out of context, and he regrets the quote.

The company forged from Perkin-Elmer amid the turmoil was the P.E. Corporation, which holds the P.E. Biosystems Group, the unit that makes the Prism machines, and Celera Genomics. Michael Hunkapillar, who is now the president of P.E. Biosystems, believed that he could sell a lot of machines to everyone, including the Human Genome Project. There was a fat profit margin in the chemicals the machines use. The chemicals cost far more than the machine over the machine's lifetime. This was the razor-blade principle: if you put razors in people's hands, you will make money selling blades.

In August, Incyte Pharmaceuticals announced that it was starting a human-genome project of its own. In September, James Watson quietly went to some key members of Congress and persuaded them to spend more money on the public project. At the same time, the leaders of the project announced a radical new game plan: they would produce a "working draft" of the human genome by 2001—a year ahead of when Venter said he'd be done—and a finished, complete version by 2003. An epic race had begun.

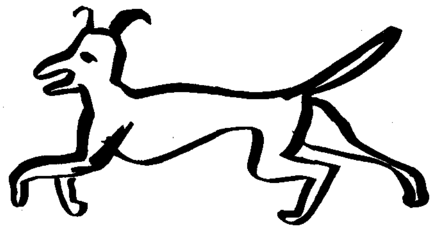
A couple of months ago, Michael Morgan, of the Wellcome Trust, was talking to me about Venter and what had happened with the creation of Celera. "From the first press release, Craig saw the public program as something he wanted to denigrate," Morgan said. "This was our first sign that Celera was setting out to undermine the international effort. What is it that motivates Craig? I think he's motivated by the same things that drive other scientists—personal ego, a degree of altruism, a desire to push human knowledge forward—but there must be something else that drives the guy. I think Craig has a huge chip on his shoulder that makes him want to be loved. I actually think Craig is desperate to win a Nobel Prize. He also wants to be very, very rich. There is a fundamental incompatibility there."

One day, I ran into a young player in the Human Genome Project. He believed in the worth and importance of the project, and said that he had turned down a job offer from Celera. He didn't have any illusions about human nature. He said, "Here's why everyone is so pissed at Craig. The whole project started when James Watson persuaded Congress to give him money for the human genome, and he turned around and gave it to his friends—they're the heads of centers today. It grew into a lot of money, and then the question was, Who was going to get the Nobel Prize? In the United States, there were seventeen centers in the project, and there was no quality control. It didn't matter how bad your data was, you just had to produce it, and people weren't being held accountable for the quality of their product. Then Celera appeared. Because of Celera, the N.I.H. was suddenly forced to consolidate its funding. The N.I.H. and Francis Collins began to dump more than eighty per cent of the money into just three centers—Baylor, Washington University, and M.I.T.—and they jacked everybody else. They had to do it, because they had to race Celera, and they couldn't control too many players. So all but three centers were cut drastically, and some of the labs closed down. Celera was not just threatening their funding but threatening their very lives and everything they had spent years building. It's kind of sad. Now those people hang around meetings, and the leaders treat them like 'If you're really nice, we'll give you a little piece of the mouse.' That's the reason so many of them are so angry at Celera. It's easier for them to go after Craig than to go after Francis Collins and the N.I.H."

At Celera's headquarters in Rockville, I was shown how human DNA was shotgunned into small pieces when it was sprayed through a hospital nebulizer that cost a dollar-fifty. The DNA fragments were then introduced into *E. coli* bacteria, and grown in glass dishes. The bacteria formed brown spots—clones—on the dishes. Each spot had a different fragment of human DNA growing in it. The dishes were carried to a room where three robots sat in glass chambers the size of small bedrooms. Each robot had an arm that moved back and forth rapidly over a dish. Little needles on the arms kept stabbing down and taking up the brown spots.

Craig Venter stood watching the robots move. The room smelled faintly like the contents of a human intestine. "This used to be done by hand. We've been picking fifty-five thousand clones a day," he said. (Later, Celera got that rate up to a hundred and twenty thousand clones a day.) All the DNA fragments would eventually wind up in the Prism sequencing machines, and what would be left, at the end, was a collection of up to twenty-two million random fragments of sequenced human DNA. Then the river of shattered DNA would come to the computer, and to a computer scientist named Eugene Myers, who with his team devised the First Assembly.

Gene Myers has dark hair and a chiselled, handsome face. He wears glasses and a green half-carat emerald in his left ear and brown Doc Martens shoes. He also has a ruby and a sapphire that he will wear in his ear, instead of the emerald, depending on his mood. He is sensitive to cold. On the hottest days of summer, Myers wears a yellow Patagonia fibrepile jacket, and he keeps a scarf wrapped around his neck. "My blood's thin," he explained to me. He says the scarf is a reference to the DNA of whatever organism he happens to be working on. When I first met Myers, in the hot summer of 1999, he was keeping himself warm in his fruit-fly scarf. It had a black-and-white zigzag pattern. This spring, Myers started wearing his human scarf, which has a green chenille weave of changing stripes. He intended his scarf to make a statement about the warfare between Celera and the public project. "I picked green for my human scarf because I've heard that green is a positive, healing color," he said. "I really want all this bickering to go away." His office is a cubicle in a sea of cubicles, most of which are stocked with Nerf guns, Stomp Rockets, and plastic Viking helmets. Occasionally, Myers puts the "Ride of the Valkyries" on a boom box, and in a loud voice he declares war. Nerf battles sweep through Celera whenever the tension rises. Myers fields a compound double-action Nerf Lock-N-Load Blaster equipped with a Hyper*Sight. "Last week we slaughtered the chromosome team," he said to me.



Myers used to be a professor of computer science at the University of Arizona in Tucson. He specializes in combinatorial algorithms. This involves the arrangements and patterns of objects. One day in 1995, he got a telephone call from a geneticist named James Weber, at the Marshfield Medical Research Foundation in Wisconsin. Weber said he felt that whole-genome shotgunning would work for organisms that have very long DNA molecules, such as humans. He wondered if Myers could help him with the math.

Jim Weber submitted a proposal to the N.I.H. for a grant—twelve million dollars—to support a pilot study of the shotgun approach on the human genome. This might speed up the project dramatically, he suggested. Weber was invited to speak to the annual meeting of the heads of the project, held in Bermuda.

Weber was nervous about it, and wanted Gene Myers to go with him to help explain the math. "Jim asked them to invite me, but they didn't," Myers says. So on February 26, 1996, Jim Weber went alone to the meeting in Bermuda and tried to make a case for shotgunning the human genome. He found himself facing a U-shaped table with about forty people at it. "They trounced Jim," Myers said. "They said it wouldn't work. They said it would be full of holes. 'A Swiss-cheese genome'—that's the term we've often heard. The grant proposal was soundly rejected."

Jim Weber says that the Swiss-cheese analogy was not far off, but that "it would have been much better to get most of the human genome quickly, even with holes in it, so that people could start using the information to understand diseases and begin to find cures for them. It would have been better if the N.I.H. had funded a pilot study. Instead, Gene and his team went out and did it. That is a huge accomplishment."

Craig Venter was hanging around while I was talking with Myers. He came up to us and said, "They not only shot Gene down—they ridiculed him. They said he was a kook. We're going to prove that Gene was right, and we're going to prove that there's something fundamentally wrong with the system."

TABAC
MARISA ACOCELLA

*"Sure, we can have dinner. But only if your breasts sign a non-compete clause."*

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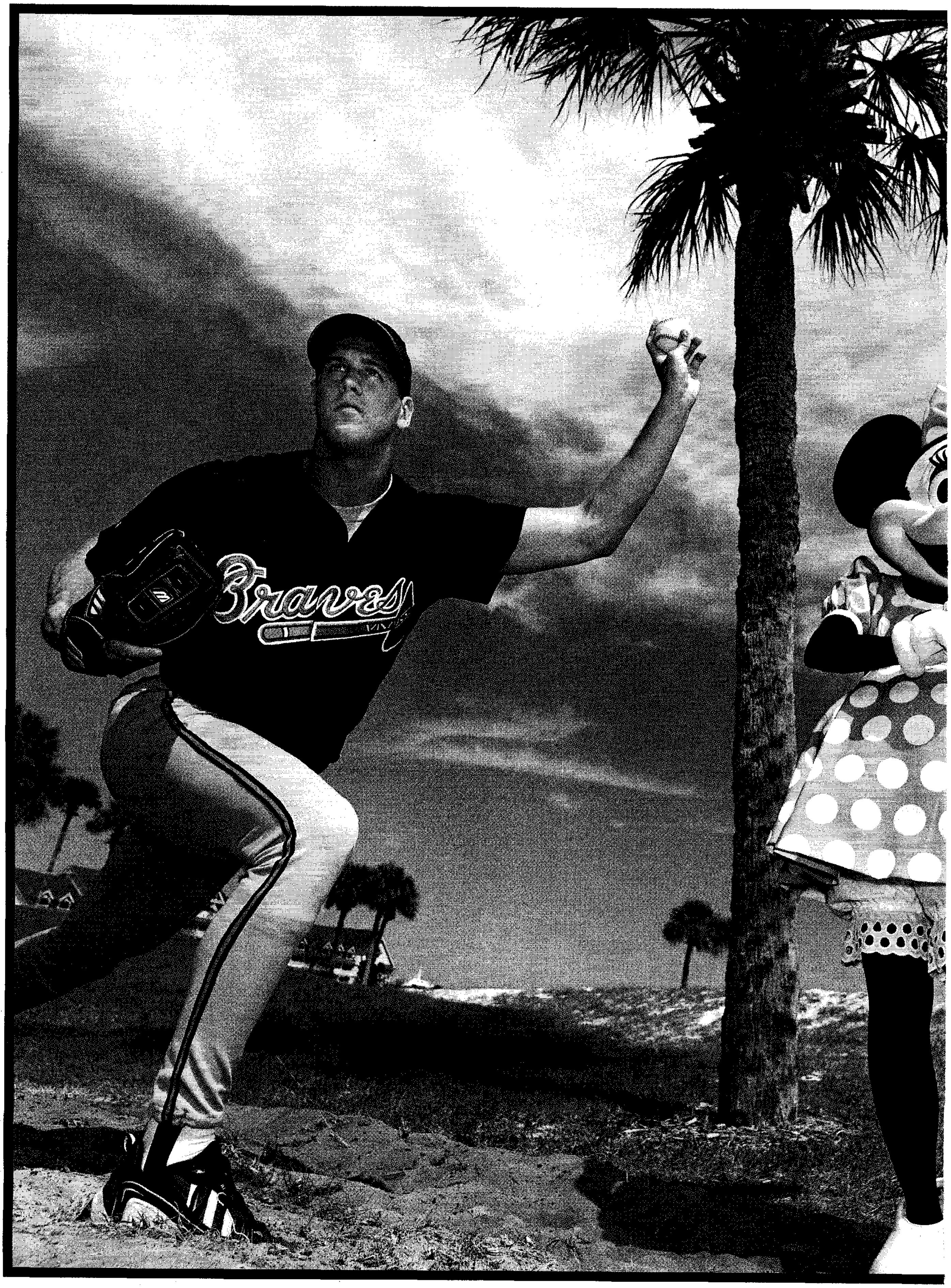
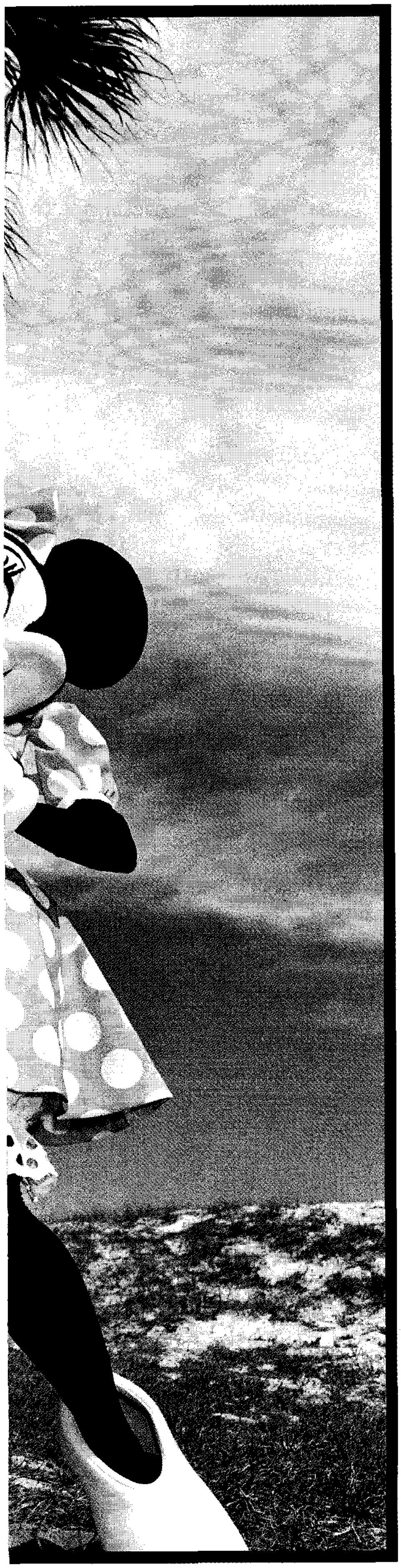
On September 9, 1999, Venter announced that Celera had completed the sequencing of the fruit fly's DNA, and had begun to run human DNA through its sequencing machines—there were now three hundred of them crammed into Building One in Rockville. The Command Center was up and running, and from then on Celera operated in high-speed mode. One day that fall, I talked with the company's information expert, a stocky man named Marshall Peterson. He took me to the computer room, in Building Two. To get into the room, Peterson punched in a security code and then placed his hand on a sensor, which read the unique pattern of his palm. There was a clack of bolts sliding back, and we pushed through the door.

A chill of cold air washed over us, and we entered a room filled with racks of computers that were wired together. "What you're looking at in this room is roughly the equivalent of America Online's network of servers," Peterson said. "We have fifty-five miles of fibre-optic cables running through this building." Workmen standing on ladders were installing many more cables in the ceiling. "The disk storage in this room is five times the size of the Library of Congress. We're getting more storage all the time. We need it."

He took me to the Command Center, where a couple of people were hanging around consoles. Some of the consoles had not had equipment installed in them yet. A big screen on the wall showed CNN Headline News. "I've got a full-time hacker working for me to prevent security breaches," Peterson said. "We're getting feelers over the Internet all the time—people trying to break into our system." Celera would be dealing with potentially valuable information about the genes of all kinds of organisms. Peterson thought that some of what he called feelers—subtle hacks and unfriendly probes—had been emanating from Celera's competitors. He said he could never prove it, though. Lately, the probes had been coming from computers in Japan. He thought it was American hackers co-opting the Japanese machines over the Internet.

By October 20th, forty days after Celera started running human DNA


Braves



THE SPORTING SCENE
BY MARY ELLEN MARK

# BIG MOUTH

"I never really thought somebody would take a backwoods ballplayer from South Georgia so seriously," John Rocker said to the press back in January, while he was still scrambling to apologize for his Tourette-ish outburst in *Sports Illustrated*. But has the pitcher been forgiven for his diatribe against New York's teen-age mothers, Russians, gays, jailbirds, and purple-haired kids? Dee Snider, of Twisted Sister, asked the Braves to stop blasting his band's "I Wanna Rock" anthem whenever Rocker enters the game. Mayor Giuliani, on his radio show, lapsed into thick Freudian accents: "John, I vant to talk to you about your deep psychological problems."

On the field, at least, Rocker appears to be back in form, currently ranking fifth in his league in saves, despite having served a two-week suspension. His big problem so far is control—he has walked the bases loaded four times in nineteen appearances. The Braves pitching coach, Leo Mazzone, suggests that this problem may be mental, a fair diagnosis but one that's now impossible to verify, because Rocker has stopped talking—wisely but too late.

Rocker's comments last winter have set off a nyah-nyah on-line version of the Civil War, waged in sports speak. For example, rockersucks.com is riddled with Yankee-redneck back-and-forth that may, to paraphrase Rocker's own apology, go too far in its competitive zeal.

On June 29th, he and the Braves return to ground zero, for four games with the Mets at Shea Stadium. Although Rocker has worried about snipers in the light towers, a source at Major League Baseball spoke confidently of sufficient security. Last year, these were not problems faced by the Ku Klux Kloser—as bleacher placards have dubbed him—when he posed with Minnie Mouse.

—*Kevin Conley*

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through its machines, the company announced that it had sequenced 1.2 billion letters of human code. The letters came in small chunks from all over the genome. Six days later, Venter announced that Celera had filed provisional patent applications for six thousand five hundred human genes. The applications were for placeholder patents. The company hoped to figure out later which of the genes would be worth patenting in earnest.

A gene patent gives its holder the right to make commercial products and drugs derived from the gene for a period of seventeen years. Pharmaceutical companies argue that patents are necessary, because without them businesses would never invest the hundreds of millions of dollars that are needed to develop a new drug and get it through the licensing process of the Food and Drug Administration. ("If you have a disease, you'd better hope someone patents the gene for it," Venter said to me.) On the other hand, parcelling out genes to various private companies could lead to what Francis Collins refers to as the "Balkanization of the human genome," a paralyzing situation that might limit researchers' access to genes.

Venter insists that Celera is an information company and that patenting genes is not its main goal. He has said that Celera will attempt to get patents on not more than about three hundred human genes. There is no question that Celera hopes to nail down some very valuable genes—billion-dollar genes, perhaps.

Celera's stock had drifted since the summer, but around Halloween, as investors began to realize that the company was cranking out the human genome—and filing large numbers of placeholder patents—it jumped up to forty dollars a share. (The prices here are pre-split prices. Adjusted for today's prices, the stock moved up to twenty dollars.) On December 2nd, the Human Genome Project announced that it had deciphered most of the code on chromosome No. 22, the second-shortest chromosome in the human genome. This made the reading of the whole genome seem more imminent, and Celera's stock began a spectacular rise. It shot up that day by nine points, to close at over seventy dollars. Then, after the market's close on Thursday, December 16th, Jeff Fischer, a co-founder of the Web site called The Motley Fool, announced that he was buying shares of Celera for his own portfolio. It is called the Rule Breaker Portfolio, and it has famously delivered wealth—Fischer bought A.O.L. very early, for example. On that Friday morning, a great number of people tried to buy Celera, and they drove the stock up twenty points. It was on its way to the pre-split equivalent of more than five hundred dollars a share. That past summer, it had been trading at fourteen.

I went to visit Celera on Tuesday of the following week, and that morning the company's stock could not open for trading. Everyone wanted to buy it, and nobody wanted to sell it. While the stock was halted—at a hundred and one dollars a share—I wandered around. There was a feeling of paralysis in the air, and I sensed that not much work was getting done that day, except by the machines. Employees were checking the quote on the Internet and wondering what their net worth would be when the stock opened. The lobby now sported fish-eye security cameras. The walls smelled of fresh paint, and the floors had a new purple carpet with a pattern that resembled worms. They were meant to look like fragments of DNA.

I found Hamilton O. Smith in his lab, puttering around with human DNA in tiny test tubes, but his heart was not in the job. He was tired. He explained that he was renovating an old house that he and his wife had bought. He had stayed up all night ripping carpet out of the basement, because new carpets were due to arrive that morning. He had driven to work in his '83 Mercury Marquis. He owned thousands of shares of Celera.

Smith passed a computer, stopped, and brought up a quote. Celera had finally opened for trading. It had gapped up—jumped instantly upward—by thirteen points. It was at a hundred and fourteen. Smith's net worth had gapped up by something on toward a million dollars. "Is there no end to this?" he muttered.

Craig Venter came into Smith's lab and asked him to lunch. In the elevator, Smith said to him, "I can't stand it, Craig. The bubble will break." They sat down beside each other in the cafeteria and ate cassoulet from bowls on trays.

"This defies common sense," Smith said. "It's really impossible to put a value on this company."

"That's what we've been telling the analysts," Venter said.

*"The only solution I can see is to hold a series of long and costly hearings in order to put off finding a solution."*

Later that day, I ended up in Claire Fraser's office at TIGR headquarters, a complex of semi-Mission-style buildings a couple of miles from Celera's offices and labs. Fraser is a tall, reserved woman with dark hair and brown eyes, and her voice has a faint New England accent. She grew up in Saugus, Massachusetts. In high school, she says, she was considered a science geek. "The only lower citizens were the nerdy guys in the audiovisual club. Of course, now they're probably in Hollywood." Her office has an Oriental rug on the floor and a table surrounded by Chippendale chairs. It was originally Venter's office. ("This is Craig's extravagant taste, not mine," she explained.) She wore an expensive-looking suit. Two poodles, Cricket and Marley, slept by a fireplace.

"Before genomics, every living organism was a black box," she said. "When you sequence a genome, it's like walking into a dark room and turning on a light. You see entirely new things everywhere."

Fraser placed a sheet of paper on the table. It contained an impossibly complicated diagram that looked like a design for an oil refinery. She explained that it was an analysis of the genome of cholera, a single-celled microbe that causes murderous diarrhea. TIGR scientists had finished sequencing the organism's DNA a few weeks earlier. Much of the picture, she said, was absolutely new to our knowledge of cholera. About a quarter of the genes of every microbe that had been decoded by TIGR were completely new to science, and were not obviously related to any other gene in any other microbe. To the intense surprise and wonder of the scientists, nature was turning out to be an uncharted sea of unknown genes. The code of life was far richer than anyone had imagined.

Fraser's eyes moved quickly over the diagram. "Yes . . . wow. . . . There may be important transporters here. . . . You see these transporters in other bacteria, and . . . I don't know . . . it looks like there could be potential for designing a new drug that could block them."

The phone rang. Fraser walked across her office, picked up the receiver, and said softly, "Craig? Hello. What? It closed at a hundred and twenty-five?" Pause. "I don't know how much it's worth—you're the one with the calculator."

Their net worth had jumped above a hundred and fifty million dollars that day.

Fraser drove home, and I followed her in my car. Their house is in the country outside Washington. It sits behind a security gate at the end of a long driveway. Venter arrived in a new Porsche. The car would do zero to sixty in five seconds, he said. In the vaulted front hall of the house there was a large stained-glass window showing branches of a willow tree, and there was a model of H.M.S. Victory in a glass case. A jumble of woodworking machines—a bandsaw, a table saw, a drill press—filled a shop attached to the garage. Venter has worked with wood since high school.

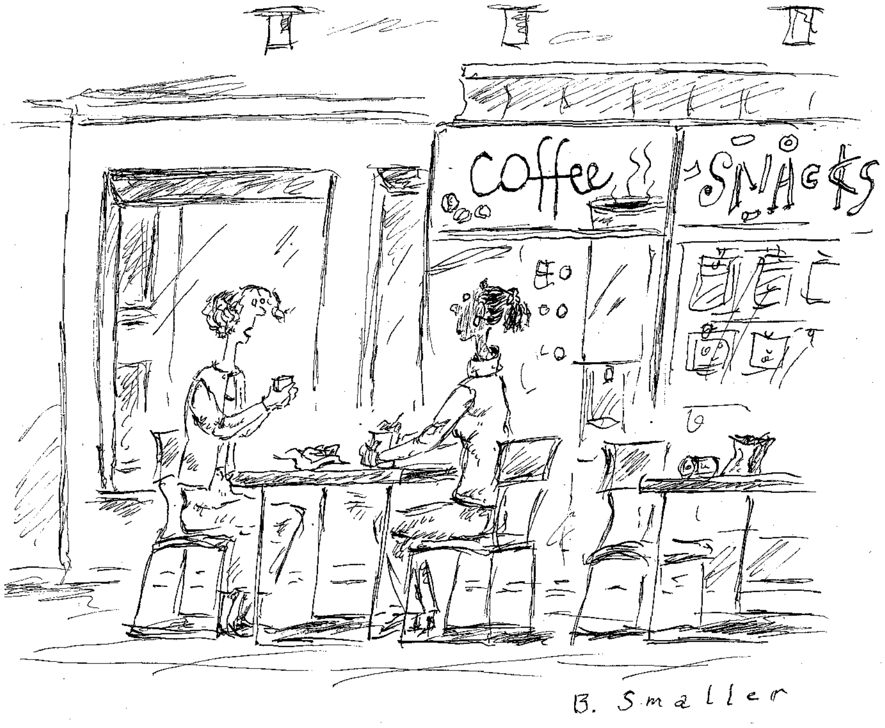
In the kitchen, Claire fixed dinner for the poodles, while Craig circled the room, talking. "We created close to two hundred millionaires in the company today. I think most of them had not a clue this would happen when they joined Celera. We have a secretary who became a millionaire today. She's married to a retired policeman. He went out looking to buy a farm." He popped a Bud Light and swigged it. "This could only happen in America. You've got to love this country." Claire fed the poodles.

There were no cooking tools in the kitchen that I could see. The counters were empty. The only food I noticed was a giant sack of dog food, sitting on top of an island counter, and two boxes of cold cereal—Quaker Oatmeal Squares and Total. In the guest bathroom, upstairs, there were no towels, and the walls were empty. The only decorative object in the bathroom was a cheap wicker basket piled with little soaps and shampoos they had picked up in hotels.

We went to a restaurant and ate steak. "We're in the Wild West of genomics," Venter said. "Celera is more than a scientific experiment; it's a business experiment. Our stock-market capitalization as of today is three and a half billion dollars. That's more than the projected cost of the Human Genome Project. I guess that's saying something. The combined market value of the Big Three genomics companies—Celera, Human Genome Sciences, and Incyte—was about twelve billion dollars at the end of today. This wasn't imaginable six months ago. The Old Guard doesn't have control of genomics anymore." He chewed steak, and looked at his wife. "What the hell are we going to do with all this money? I could play around with boats. . . ."

Claire started laughing. "My God, I couldn't live with you."

"The money's nice, but it's not the motivation," Venter said to me. "The motivation is sheer curiosity."



*"He's playing very hard to get—he's got a restraining order."*

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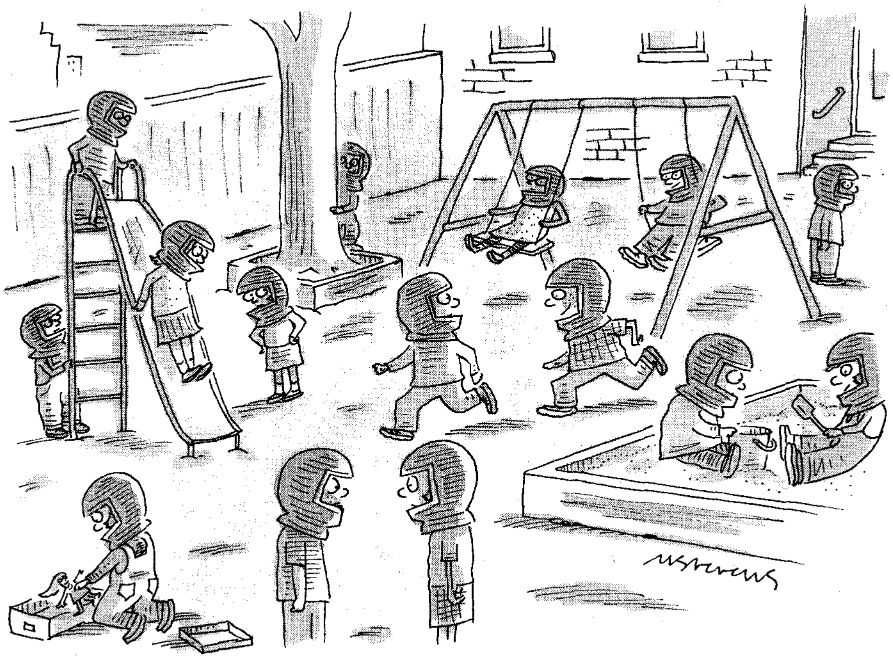
In December, 1999, Celera and the Human Genome Project discussed whether it would be possible to collaborate. There was one formal meeting, and there were many points of difference. Meanwhile, Celera's stock seemed to go into escape velocity from the earth. In January, it soared over two hundred dollars a share. Celera filed to offer more shares to the public, and declared a two-for-one stock split. Shortly after the split, on February 25th, the stock hit an all-time high of two hundred and seventy-six dollars a share (more than five hundred and fifty dollars, pre-split). Celera's stock-market value reached fourteen billion dollars, and Venter's worth surpassed seven hundred million dollars. It looked as if Venter could become a billionaire of biotechnology.

Then, on March 6th, newspapers carried reports that the discussions between Celera and the public project had collapsed. The main point of disagreement, according to officials at the public project, was that Celera wanted to keep control of intellectual property in the human genome. Celera intended to license its analyzed database to pharmaceutical companies and nonprofit research institutions, for payment. Celera said that it would let anyone use the data, but that any other company would be forbidden from reselling the data. The Human Genome people insisted that the period of restriction on the data could be for no more than a year, and after that the data should be totally public. Celera argued that it didn't want its competitors to resell the information and profit from Celera's work. Celera's stock began to drop.

On March 14th, President Clinton



*"I liked recess a lot better before the safety helmets."*

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and Prime Minister Blair of Great Britain released a joint statement to the effect that all the genes in the human body "should be made freely available to scientists everywhere." The statement had been drafted with the help of Francis Collins and his staff, and had been in the works for a year. It was vague, but it looked like an Anglo-American smart bomb aimed at Celera, and it scared the daylights out of investors in biotechnology stocks, who feared that potentially lucrative patents on genes might be undermined by some new government policy.

On the day of the Clinton-Blair statement, Celera's stock went into a screaming nosedive. It dropped fifty-seven dollars in a matter of hours, amid trading halts and order imbalances. The other genomic stocks crashed in sympathy with Celera, and this, in turn, dragged down the Nasdaq, which that day suffered the second-largest point loss in its history. Short-sellers—people who profit from the decline of a stock—encrusted Celera like locusts. As of this writing, the Nasdaq has not recovered. Venter's mother telephoned him afterward, and said to him, "Craig, you've managed to do overnight what Alan Greenspan has been trying to do for years."

"It's not every day you get attacked by the President and the Prime Minister," Venter said to me late that night on the telephone. "I'm expecting a call from the Pope any day now, asking me to recant the human genome." He sounded wired and exhausted. "I feel a little like Galileo. They offered to have a barbecue with him, right? Look, I'm not likening myself to Galileo in terms of genius, but it is clear that the human genome is the science event of our time. I am going to publish the genome, and that's what the threat to the public order is. If Celera was keeping the genome a secret, the way Incyte and Human Genome Sciences are, you wouldn't hear a peep out of the government. Our publishing the genome makes a mockery of the fifteen years and billions of dollars the public project has spent on it."

Venter seemed particularly upset with the British part of the public project. "In my opinion," he said, "the Wellcome Trust is now trying to justify how, as a private charity, it gave what I think was well over a billion dollars to the Sanger Centre to do just a third of the human genome, largely at the expense of the rest of British medical science. Clinton and Blair took forty billion dollars out of the biotechnology industry today—that's how much was lost by investors. It was money that would pay for cures for cancer, and it was taken off the table, all because some bastards at the Wellcome Trust are trying to cover up their losses."

I called Michael Morgan, at the Wellcome Trust, to see what he had to say about this. "In hindsight, it is easy to ascribe to us Machiavellian powers that the Prince would have been proud of," he said dryly. "As for the allegation that I'm a bastard, I can easily disprove it using the technology of the Human Genome Project."

The day after the Clinton-Blair statement and the crash in biotech stocks, a White House spokesman made a point of telling reporters that the Administration supported the patenting of genes.

On March 24th, Venter and his colleagues published a substantially complete genome of the fruit fly—*Drosophila*—in *Science*. It was also published by Celera on a CD, which Venter had placed on the chairs of thirteen hundred fly researchers at a conference in Pittsburgh. Venter emphasized the fact that the fly genome had been a collaboration with a publicly funded project. In other words, he was suggesting there was no real reason that the Human Genome Project couldn't collaborate with Celera, too. The fly project—known as the Berkeley Drosophila Genome Project—is headed by a fly geneticist named Gerald Rubin.

"One of the things I really like about Craig Venter is that he almost totally lacks tact," Rubin said to me. "If he thinks you are an idiot, he will say so. I find that way of dealing very enjoyable. Craig is like somebody who's using the wrong fork at a fancy dinner. He'll tell you what he thinks of the food, but he won't even think about what fork he's using. It was a great collaboration."

John Sulston, the head of the Sanger Centre, told the BBC that he felt Celera planned to "Hoover up all the public data, which we are producing, add some of their own, and sell it as a packaged product." He added, "The emerging truth is absolutely extraordinary. They really do intend to establish a complete monopoly position on the human genome for a period of at least five years," and he said, "It's something of a con job."

"Sulston essentially called us a fraud. It's like he's been bit by a rabid animal," Venter fumed.

"It's puzzling. To me, the whole fight defies rational analysis," Hamilton O. Smith said to me, shortly after his net worth had cratered in Celera's mudslide. "But the publicly funded labs are angry for reasons I can partly understand. We took it away from them. We took the big prize away from them, when they thought they would be the team that would do the whole human genome and go down in history. Pure and simple, they hate us."

On April 6th, Venter announced that Celera had finished the sequencing phase of the human genome, and was moving on to First Assembly. Celera had produced some eighteen million fragments of the first genome, perhaps Craig Venter's. Soon afterward, on an unseasonably warm day, while the cherry trees were in full blossom, I visited Celera to see how the assembly was going. I found Gene Myers in his cubicle, looking chilled. He was bundled up in his yellow fibrepile jacket and his green human scarf. He and his team had started running chunks of human DNA code through the computers over the weekend. The first run had resulted in a mess—something was wrong with the software. They had done some tweaks, and they were running a few more chunks of code. It would take months to assemble the whole thing.

"Assembly is pretty boring," he said, somewhat apologetically.

Myers said that Celera would be using all of the Human Genome Project's human DNA code—which was published on the GenBank Web site—and would tear it into fragments and compare them with Celera's DNA code, and then the software that his team had written would try to assemble all the fragments into a whole human genome. At the same time, Celera was coolly telling the public project that its scientists could see Celera's data but only if they came to look at the data on Celera's computer. The collaboration had never come to pass.

Minutes later, one of Myers's people, a computer scientist named Knut Reinert, hurried in, and told him that the first assembled human-genome sequence had just come out of the computers. Myers put the "Ride of the Valkyries" on the boom box, and fifteen people tried to crowd into Reinert's cubicle.

Myers bent over Reinert's shoulder and said, "We got it! We got the first *one*! This is the first assembled human sequence we've gotten out of nature!"

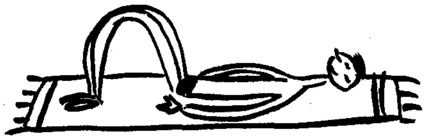
What appeared on the screen was a mathematical diagram of a stretch of human DNA. It showed arrows going in various directions, connecting dots together. "The picture looks like a Super Bowl debriefing," one Celera programmer remarked.

They talked about it for a few minutes, and then everyone drifted back to work. That day, Celera's stock dropped another twenty per cent.

In early May, another company got into the business of the human genome. DoubleTwist, Inc., announced that it had teamed up with Sun Microsystems to compete with Celera. DoubleTwist and Sun were offering an analyzed database of the human genome to anyone for a fee, using the data from the Human Genome Project, not from Celera. The price was six hundred and fifty thousand dollars for a database that would be updated regularly.

At the same time, Celera's stock had gone down below a hundred dollars a share. Many investors had recently bought the secondary offering, paying two hundred and twenty-five dollars a share for it. This brought on a slew of class-action lawsuits against Celera, filed by law firms specializing in shareholder suits. There were various claims, sparked by the fact that the secondary investors had lost sixty per cent of their money. These lawsuits will probably be consolidated, and Celera will either settle or fight them in court.

As for the science, knowledgeable observers believed that, in the end, Celera had actually spent about half a billion dollars to sequence the human genome—three hundred million more than Venter had originally predicted. Was it worth it? I asked many biologists about this, and most of them spoke the way scientists do when they believe that a great door has been opened, and light is shining deep into nature, suggesting the presence of rooms upon rooms that have never been seen before. There was also a clear sense that the door would not have been opened so soon if Craig Venter and Celera had not given it a swift kick.



"We can thank Venter in retrospect," James Watson said, leaning back and smiling and squinting at the ceiling. "I was worried he could do it, and that would stop public funding of the Human Genome Project. But if an earthquake suddenly rattled through Rockville and destroyed Celera's computers, it wouldn't make much difference." He stood up, and offered me the door.

Eric Lander, who professes to like Venter, said, "Having the human genome is like having a Landsat map of the earth, compared to a world where the map tapers off into the unknown, and says, 'There be dragons.' It's as different a view of human biology as a map of the earth in the fourteen-hundreds was compared to a view from space today." As for the war between Celera and the public project, he said, "At a certain level, it is just boys behaving badly. It happens to be the most important project in science of our time, and it has all the character of a schoolyard brawl."

Norton Zinder, Watson's friend, who had feared that he would die before he saw the human genome, said that he felt marvellous. "I made it. Now I've gotta stay alive for four more years, or I won't get all my options in Celera." Zinder, who is a vigorous-seeming older man, was sprawled in a chair in his office overlooking the East River, gesturing with both hands raised. He shifted gears and began to look into the future. "This is the beginning of the beginning," he said. "The human genome alone doesn't tell you crap. This is like Vesalius. Vesalius did the first human anatomy." Vesalius published his work in 1543, an anatomy based on his dissections of cadavers. "Before Vesalius," Zinder went on, "people didn't even know they had hearts and lungs. With the human genome, we finally know what's there, but we still have to figure out how it all works. Having the human genome is like having a copy of the Talmud but not knowing how to read Aramaic." ♦

### LETTER FROM JAPAN

# A DYNASTY FALTERS

*If Crown Princess Masako doesn't produce a male heir, she may be the country's last Empress.*

### BY MURRAY SAYLE

The village where my family and I live, sixty miles from Tokyo, greeted the New Year in the traditional Japanese-woodblock-print way: pink paper lanterns glowing on gaunt, leafless cherry trees in the courtyard of our ancient Shinto shrine, neighbors gathered around a brisk bonfire to pour hot *sake* from kettles, chew freshly pounded rice cakes, and trade greetings and gossip. At the stroke of midnight, we lined up at the weathered wooden sanctuary, rang a bronze bell, tossed small coins into a grated collection box, clapped our hands to attract the attention of the resident deity, bowed, asked for his (or was it her?) protection in the year ahead, and then trooped back to the fire for more *sake* and cheerful talk.

Still, there was an undercurrent of uneasiness. Japan is awash in worries these days: a recession now entering its tenth year, an unruly volcano, scandals in the police force, in the army, and in the government bureaucracy, a tactless political leadership, even pieces falling off the famous bullet trains. But we had just heard an even more disappointing bit of news. On December 10th, the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*, circulation 8.3 million, had reported that Princess Masako, the thirty-six-year-old wife of Crown Prince Naruhito, heir to the oldest monarchy in the world, was showing "early indications" of pregnancy. The other Japanese media pounced on the story, and, when the TV networks discovered that Masako had scheduled an examination with palace doctors for December 30th, they prepared to greet the expected good news with a gala night of special programming on New Year's Eve. On the thirtieth, however, there was a bleak announcement from the Imperial Household Agency in Tokyo: Princess Masako had suffered a miscarriage.

The TV shows were cancelled; instead, before heading for the shrine, we watched routine reports on the Y2K computer glitch that didn't happen and joyful displays of fireworks welcoming the new millennium in other parts of the world. (Non-Christian Japan did not acknowledge the millennium.) The Princess's pregnancy, apparently her first, after nearly seven years of marriage, was only a few weeks old and had never been officially confirmed. To make a national tragedy out of a normal hazard of life seemed a touch excessive, not to mention tastelessly intrusive, but we sat around the leaping fire and listened as our neighbors voiced their concern.

"The newspapers should have left Masako-*sama* in peace until she had her baby," our next-door neighbor said. "Any woman could tell them that the publicity would upset her."

"They're putting too much pressure on her," the village midwife said. "It's unfair." She has delivered all the children in the village, including our three, and should know.

"And she's expected to produce a boy, too. Why can't we have a woman on the throne, as they do in England?" This from a housewife who, like many Japanese, admires the British monarchy.

"Why do we need them at all? America has a President." This from our resident republican, a high-school teacher of mild left-wing views.

"Japan just wouldn't be Japan without a *Tenno*," our neighbor who sews kimono for special occasions argued. *Tenno*, from the Chinese, means "Son of Heaven"—that is, the reigning emperor. "We have to have someone in Japan to respect, and who else is there?"

"Perhaps they could adopt a child, if they still have no luck," the policeman's wife said, but she spoke with a wistful tinge. After years of marriage, she is herself still childless, and adopting non-relatives is all but unknown in Japan, where most people are unwilling to introduce "alien" blood into the family line.

We drank more *sake*, saw no obvious solution, and went thoughtfully to bed.

Since that national sigh of disappointment at New Year's, the normally cheerful and outgoing Princess Masako has barely been seen in public. Angry newspaper editorials have accused the palace bureaucrats of being partly to blame for her mishap—for not having cancelled an official visit to Belgium when the Princess's pregnancy was first suspected—and the normally affable Prince Naruhito has made an unprecedentedly blunt call to the media to show more "prudence and consideration . . . in areas that should remain part of an individual's privacy." Behind these recriminations lies an unspoken fear, which the royal historian Isao Tokoro, of Kyoto Sangyo University, expresses in unusually plain words: "If things go on as they are, there will be no successor to the imperial line." Japan's ancient monarchy is suddenly facing extinction, and just at a time when it has come to seem, to many Japanese, both socially and politically indispensable.

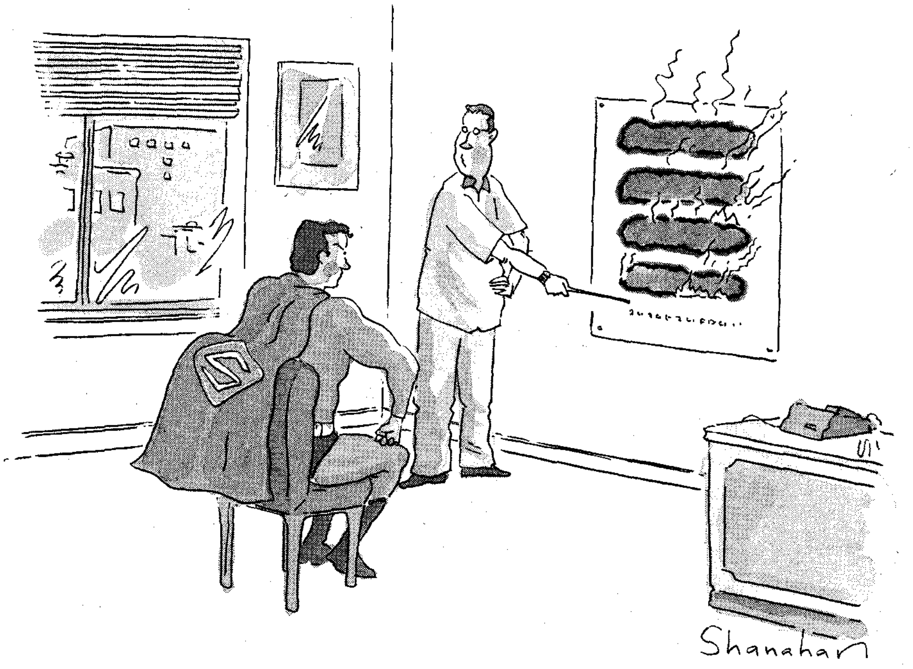
The institution of monarchy is often viewed as outmoded and undemocratic, a dying tradition trapped between the circulation-hungry media and the tendency of its younger members to behave in ways that make them dubious moral role models. Its function, in most countries, seems ornamental at best, without political significance, beyond, perhaps, a vague tilt to the traditional right. In Japan, the situation is reversed. No breath of sexual scandal has, in living memory, touched any member of the royal family. The domestic lives of the present Emperor Akihito and the much-admired Empress Michiko have been exemplary, and Japan's royal family regularly scores approval ratings of anywhere from sixty to seventy per cent and up in polls in which the present Japanese Cabinet's

*Crown Prince Naruhito and Masako Owada during a dress rehearsal for their wedding, at the Imperial Palace, in June of 1993.*

AP WIDE WORLD

support recently sank to nineteen per cent. In early April, when Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi suffered a massive, and ultimately fatal, stroke, Yoshiro Mori, the successor who finally emerged from much undocumented deal-cutting in classically smoke-filled rooms, had little to commend him, apart from having fewer enemies than the other candidates and having not been indicted (although he was named) in three major bribery scandals. Japan's Cabinet-style government doesn't benefit from the purifying muck-sifting of an American primary campaign, and Mori was just another face in the political crowd until he was handed his commission by Emperor Akihito, the living beacon of legitimacy and probity in a system that is notoriously short on both.

For older conservatives, the royal family inspires respect simply because Akihito is the hundred-and-twenty-fifth—and Naruhito will be the hundred-and-twenty-sixth—Emperor of Japan, in supposedly direct descent from the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu Omikami ("Great Heaven-Illuminating Deity"), who is the reputed ancestress of the Japanese people. Some contemporary foreign scholars are more inclined to see the origin of the Japanese imperial line in a band of adventurous traders-cum-pirates who may have come to Japan's southern island, Kyushu, some two thousand years ago, via southern Korea. According to this theory, the newcomers, who eventually conquered the island's inhabitants, brought with them their worship of the goddess of the sun, who was supposedly the ancestress of *their* clan. The Sun Goddess very likely had priestesses, as sun cults still do in parts of Central Asia. One historian has conjectured that Jimmu, Japan's legendary



first emperor, descended from the union of one of these priestesses and an invading warrior, thereby inheriting the high priesthood from his female forebear and his political office from his male ancestor. Every emperor since then has owed his legitimacy to his hereditary religious position, and the cult of the sun has been inextricably woven into Japanese national identity: into the rising-sun flag, the name of the country (Nihon and Nippon both mean "Sun Origin"), and even into the names of big Japanese corporations—Hitachi ("Sunrise"), Asahi ("Rising Sun"), Nissan ("Sun Origin Industries"), and countless more.

But the nation's founding myth has not been taught in Japanese schools since 1947, when, under pressure from Japan's American occupiers, Emperor Hirohito—the father of the present Emperor Akihito—renounced his claim to divinity. How totally the Sun Goddess herself has since faded from the postwar Japanese consciousness I checked with a practical test. "Who is the deity in there?" I asked my neighbors at our New Year's shrine gathering. "Don't know." "Does it matter?" "Some old god or other," they guessed. Our seventy-five-year-old tailor, a shrine elder, confirmed my guess that it was the Sun Goddess, and permitted a quick peek into the inner sanctuary, which hadn't been opened in decades. The room's only object was a dusty bronze mirror, the incarnation of the Sun Goddess. The younger Japanese admire the royal family not because of a half-forgotten myth of divine descent but, paradoxically, because of its contemporary life style, wide travels, and real intellectual attainments.

Yet there are more substantial political reasons for the success of this dynasty in the modern age. Along with fifteen hundred recorded years of monarchy, Japan had seven centuries of military dictatorship, which culminated in the last, suicidal war against the world. The Second World War was fought in the name of Hirohito, and he was lucky to avoid being tried as a war criminal, and, quite possibly, hanged, after Japan's surrender. At the very least, he might have been deposed if it hadn't been for the fact that his eldest son, Akihito, was only eleven years old when the war ended, and no regent untainted by militarism was available. Thanks in part to an American Quaker tutor hired by Hirohito, at significant personal cost, young Prince Akihito developed strong pacifist views—as did many members of his generation (Yoko Ono, his classmate at the Tokyo Peers' School, among them). He has given many indications that he holds those views to this day, and no one doubts that his son Naruhito and daughter-in-law Masako share them.

The royal family is thus widely seen as a safeguard for Japan's fragile and imperfect democracy. The country still has a semi-fascist, petty-criminal far right, whose armored buses, with loudspeakers blaring old military marches and hate-filled slogans, are driven around Tokyo and other cities by unkempt toughs, intimidating pedestrians and drivers, without noticeable police interference. These leftovers from Japan's violent past have no overt representation in the Japanese parliament—any more than America's far-right extremists have a public voice in Congress—but there is no guarantee that things will stay that way, particularly if Japan's economy deteriorates further. Only two weeks after Prime Minister Obuchi's stroke and the resulting confusion as to who was in charge of Japan, Shintaro Ishihara, the newly elected governor of Tokyo, who often talks like a nineteen-thirties nationalist demagogue, called on the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force to be "on the alert for rioting foreigners," who, he warned, were often guilty of "atrocious crimes" in times of natural disaster. This might sound, as Ishihara later claimed, no stronger than a plea for vigilance by the National Guard in the United States, if it weren't for Japan's history of xenophobia. Right after the 1923 Tokyo earthquake, for instance, at least six thousand blameless Koreans were murdered, their killers including on-duty policemen and soldiers of the old Imperial Army. Still, no would-be dictator could rise to power without the Emperor's help and blessing, and in the care of this plainly peace-loving royal family Japan's democracy feels a lot safer.

Our own village has witnessed, close up, the unifying potential of the monarchy. Not long before Crown Prince Naruhito married Masako, he visited us to inaugurate a dam that towers above our local river, a mile or so upstream. In our village's first and, so far, only political demonstration, marchers from the Japan Communist Party charged that the five-hundred-and-twelve-foot dam was four billion dollars' worth of pointless pork, dangerous to people living below it in an active earthquake zone. Chubby, smiling, and jovial, the Prince praised the respect that the dam's builders had shown for our mountain environment and reminded us of industrial Japan's need for water. We have seen no further marches, and so far the dam has held up through several small quakes.

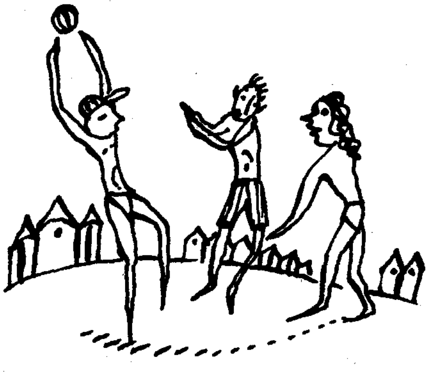
Despite the symbolic importance of the royal family in Japan, until recently little thought was given to its continuity. The country has enjoyed an all but unbroken male succession of more than fifteen centuries, with the throne passing almost mechanically from father to son ever since there was an emperor in Rome. (Europe's long-reigning dynasties—the Hapsburgs in Austria and Germany, the Bourbons in Spain and France—by contrast, have had interruptions, illegitimacies, and descent through junior and female lines.) Even odder, the world's oldest dynasty has no family name. These facts conceal a dark truth, little recognized in Japan or anywhere else: before this century, the Japanese royal family was not a biological family at all; it was a useful political fiction.

Until the nineteen-twenties, the Japanese royal line was sustained by the ancient Oriental practice of concubinage; a rotating panel of part-time mistresses, between twelve and fifty of them, was assigned to each emperor by ambitious noble families in Japan's ancient capitals, Nara and then Kyoto. The same families also supplied the emperor with his sole legal wife—a position so powerless that the aristocratic young ladies of Kyoto often hastened to marry someone else in order to avoid it. Whenever the question of providing a successor arose, the emperor would drop a silk handkerchief at the feet of the mistress on duty. The resulting children were brought up not in the imperial household but by the families who had volunteered their daughters; in this way, collateral branches of the imperial line were founded, from which new emperors could descend. At the risk of some inbreeding, concubinage insured that a suitable crown prince was almost always available to succeed a deceased emperor, and imperial continuity was thus guaranteed.

What continued under this arrangement was not a real family but the office of emperor, passed around like a precious parcel among powerful clans—the Fujiwaras, the Tachibanas, the Minamotos, the Tairas, and others—who intrigued, futon-hopped, and brought up one another's children. Hiroshi Takahashi, the author of several books on the royal family, records that Emperor Meiji, who began Japan's spectacular modernization, in 1868, was the son of a concubine, as was his mentally unstable son, Taisho, who came to the throne in 1912. However, Taisho's heir, Hirohito, was born to Taisho's lawful wife, Empress Sadako, of the Fujiwara clan. Hirohito, impressed, on a 1921 visit to London, by the then ultra-respectable British royal family—"No geishas here, I'm afraid!" George V told his young guest—abolished concubinage in 1924, the year he married Nagako, a woman of strong family values. Thirty-nine mature official concubines still on the palace books were commended for their public spirit, paid off, and sent home. Nagako's first four children were girls, and it seemed possible that concubinage might have to be revived, but in 1933 the future Emperor Akihito was born, followed, in 1935, by a brother, Prince Hitachi.

Because of the earlier system, however, in 1945 there were eleven collateral branches of the Japanese imperial family and fifty-one Kyoto aristocrats who could boast enough royal blood to be plausible emperors and, Japan's conquerors feared, possible figureheads for revived militarism. In 1947, the Japanese parliament, pressured by the American occupiers, hastily passed a new Imperial Household Law, limiting the succession to direct male descendants of the current emperor or his brothers and uncles. As a safeguard against manipulation of the throne, adoption was excluded. At the time, these restrictions seemed to pose no threat to the future of the monarchy. Proud of their royal family's long history, few Japanese ever knew how it had been achieved, and Hirohito, then forty-five, had three brothers and two sons.

Formal in public, puritanical in private, Hirohito made few attempts to become a popular monarch. But he survived defeat in a war that cost three million Japanese lives, presided at an aloof distance over an astonishing comeback, demilitarized his throne, and managed a sixty-three-year reign—the longest in Japanese history. And, in a startling break with tradition, he consented when Akihito announced that he wanted to marry Michiko Shoda, the Christian-educated, English-speaking daughter of a flour and soy-sauce tycoon, whom the Prince had met while playing tennis. The plain Miss Shoda—now Empress Michiko, and Masako's mother-in-law—was the first person of neither royal nor aristocratic descent ever to join the royal family, and she turned the dynasty into a family that any Japanese person can easily recognize as very like his or her own. When Michiko bore her first child, Naruhito, she contributed a Japanese tanka poem on the joys of motherhood to the annual Imperial Poetry Contest:



I stretch out my hands
Scented with young leaves,
My little boy gurgles at the sky.

It was the first poem on an intimate theme to be entered in the contest in twelve hundred years. Michiko not only breast-fed the baby herself—all previous royal infants, legitimate or not, had been wet-nursed—but described the process in another poem:

Milky white spills from his mouth
Clasped around my breast
From his busy crimson lips.

And any parent can identify with a third poem she wrote the same year:

Although he is my own,
I hold my child anxiously in my arms,
Like a treasure I have been given.

Japanese royals have sometimes been suspected of using ghost poets—Emperor Meiji supposedly wrote ninety thousand tanka while directing wars against China and Russia—but these poems spoke from a proud mother's heart.

In 1995, Akihito and Michiko, touring Kobe after a devastating earthquake, dropped into a school gymnasium crowded with survivors camped out on bare boards, took off their shoes, and

SAUL AND GAYFRYD
STEINBERG'S
TAG SALE
EVERYTHING MUST GO —

STEVE BRODNER

walked down the rows of their homeless subjects, offering words of comfort. Such small, human gestures, unheard of in previous reigns, explain in part the high approval ratings the royal family now enjoys.

Concern about the future of the redefined Japanese monarchy surfaced almost as soon as Akihito took the throne, in 1989. Under the new rules, the succession had passed to an alarmingly small group—there were only seven possible candidates, and five of them were elderly. The new Emperor had one surviving brother, Prince Hitachi, but he was childless. By the time Akihito's son, Prince Naruhito, came to the throne, there might be only one eligible successor left—Naruhito's younger brother, Prince Akishino, generally known as Prince Aya. (Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko also have a daughter, Princess Nori, but as a woman she could neither follow her father nor pass the succession to a son of her own.) The future of the Japanese monarchy therefore depended on a son's being born either to Naruhito or to his brother.

Prince Aya was the first to marry, in 1990—well below his station, in the view of palace officials. He chose Kiko Kawashima, the daughter of an economics professor, whom he had met in a university bookshop and to whom he impulsively proposed at a Tokyo street crossing, while waiting for the red light to change. To suggestions that he not marry until his elder brother had found a bride, the tall, mustached Prince Aya, an admirer of other Asian cultures and a frequent visitor to Bangkok, is said to have responded by threatening to resign his royal status. The marriage went ahead, and the couple have two daughters, Mako, now eight, and Kako, six—both, as females, ineligible to succeed.

Prince Naruhito was slow to follow his brother. He studied for two years at Oxford, and on his return to Tokyo completed a degree in Japanese economic history. He lived with his parents until he was thirty and had no known girlfriends. Unfounded rumors circulated in Tokyo bars that the Prince was impotent or immersed in history to the exclusion of all other interests. On his thirty-first birthday, he was invested as Crown Prince and was pointedly asked, at an unscripted press conference (itself an innovation for Japanese royalty), about his marriage plans. "In the sense of abstaining from luxuries, I prefer someone who has the same plain tastes and modest money sense as myself," he replied. "A cultured person who values simple beauty. Not a person who wants to buy this and that at, say, Tiffany's in New York." Did he have someone in mind? Naruhito declined to answer.

Then, in 1993, when he was thirty-three, the reason for the long wait became clear. The Prince, we learned, had met his dream princess seven years earlier, on October 18, 1986, when he attended a musical afternoon tea in honor of Princess Elena of Spain. There he had been introduced to Masako Owada, then twenty-two, the eldest daughter of a high-powered diplomat, Hisashi Owada, who later became vice foreign minister—the professional head of the Japanese foreign service. Masako means "feminine elegance," and she does indeed match the Prince's yearning description; her friends confirm that she is modest in her tastes, and she possesses the kind of sturdy good looks that promise to wear well. Having grown up partly on her father's foreign postings, she speaks English, French, German, Spanish, and Russian, in addition to Japanese. Only weeks before the tea party, she had passed the brutal entrance examinations for the diplomatic service, which put her among eight hundred or so "fast-track" bureaucrats who run Japan's ministries and, by extension, Japan. Masako was leaving shortly to spend two years at Oxford, and she already had a degree in economics from Harvard. "She was a quiet, unusually intelligent young woman and a very hard worker, unassuming and a bit shy, thoroughly assimilated into the Harvard environment of the day," I was told by Andrew Gordon, a professor for whom Masako had researched aspects of the imperial system in Japan. The future Empress, a natural athlete who hikes, skis, and plays tennis, once tried out for an all-girl wrestling team under the ring name Nancy, and was a popular coxswain of the otherwise all-male first rowing eight at Balliol College, Oxford. The Owadas are of samurai (hereditary-warrior) descent, and have produced many professors, headmasters, and scholars—an intellectual nobility that is much admired in Japan. Hisashi Owada hoped that his accomplished daughter would succeed him, becoming the first woman vice-minister. Insiders say that her chances were excellent.

Naruhito was bowled over at that first meeting. "She is so pleasant, she makes me unaware of the passing of time," he told TV viewers years later. Further discreet meetings followed, and Masako dined at the palace with Naruhito's family, who were favorably impressed. After a few more meetings, at which the couple were never alone, the Prince met Masako's parents and proposed. Masako's answer was a polite, respectful no. She was not prepared to give up her promising career for marriage, no matter how highly placed her suitor was. For the next five years, Naruhito and Masako didn't meet or communicate. The tentative romance seemed to be over.

In the meantime, a three-man princess search group had been established at the palace, and, in the summer of 1992, as the Crown Prince neared thirty-three, the team asked Naruhito for suggestions. Unless they could come up with a second Masako Owada, he reportedly told them, they were wasting government time; he intended to stay single. The palace's grand steward enlisted the help of Masako's father, and Owada persuaded his daughter to take tea with the Prince at the home of one of his predecessors at the Foreign Ministry. After their next meeting, by the Imperial duck pond, the answer was still no, but more meetings followed, and many telephone calls—one from Empress Michiko, who reportedly reassured Masako that she would have no mother-in-law problems. On December 19, 1992, Masako, then twenty-nine, at last accepted the Prince's proposal.

The royal wedding took place on June 9, 1993, and a month later Masako made a dazzling début in her new diplomatic career as Crown Princess. Seated between Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin at a palace banquet for the leaders of the Group of Seven industrialized nations, she conversed with both in their own languages, having previously exchanged pleasantries with François Mitterrand in his. Japan swelled with national pride at this feat, which few royal houses, and certainly none of the assembled politicians, could match.

The next public occasion, people assumed, would be the Shinto blessing of a new baby, preferably male. On being asked before the wedding how many children the couple planned to have, a smiling Naruhito had replied, "We will let the mood of the stork decide." (The baby-delivering stork is a Western, not a Japanese, myth.) "I told him not to expect enough players to complete an orchestra," Masako joked at the same press conference. (The members of the royal family all play instruments, and Masako had recently taken up the flute.) Rumors that the Crown Princess was pregnant were heard almost as soon as the newlyweds returned from their honeymoon, a dutiful visit to the principal shrine of the Sun Goddess, at Ise. "I don't feel any special pressure to have a baby," Masako said at a subsequent joint press conference with her husband. "Whatever will be will be." In December, 1994, the Japanese media marked the Princess's thirty-first birthday with a press conference that became a yearly ritual: a statement from the Princess about her concern for the world's trouble spots (that year, it was refugees from Rwanda) was followed by heavy-handed questions about her continuing failure to announce a pregnancy.

The marriage showed every sign of being a happy one. Prince and Princess were photographed hiking and picnicking in the Japanese Alps, a favorite low-cost pastime of young Japanese couples. They toured the Middle East, reportedly making a good impression on Japan's oil suppliers. They acquired two frisky Akitas, Pippi and Mari, and walked them together on the Tokyo palace grounds. But mean-spirited commentaries began to appear in the Japanese press, obliquely accusing Masako of lacking patriotism, hinting that she was Japanese on the outside and a foreigner inside. On her thirty-third birthday, the Princess gave a rare press conference without her husband and complained that certain media stories "are not based on the truth or draw extreme conclusions."

Naruhito tried to take the pressure off his wife by fielding questions with good humor. "I'm afraid too much disturbance could upset the stork's mood," he told a reporter on the first anniversary of their engagement. "I think the stork would prefer a bit of peace," he joked on his thirty-sixth birthday, in 1996. The couple were reported to have undergone fertility tests, and there were speculations that the Prince might have a low sperm count, a condition said to be afflicting a mysteriously high proportion of Japanese men. Last year, on his thirty-ninth birthday, Naruhito was asked once again whether the couple were expecting a child, and again he joked about the stork, adding, I thought with a touch of impatience, that he well understood the importance of the question and his people's hopes.

On December 10th, the *Asahi Shimbun* scoop on Masako's pregnancy hit the stands. "It was despicable journalism, but I wish we'd had it," an editor of the rival *Daily Yomiuri* told a visiting foreign colleague. The *Mainichi* estimated that a baby boom inspired by the royal pregnancy could stimulate spending on toys and baby clothes, pushing up Japan's gross domestic product by as much as two-tenths of a per cent. Other media saw a possible reversal of Japan's plummeting birth rate, which, at 1.44 babies per woman, is far below replacement level.

Then came the sad news. According to a royal obstetrician, the Princess had been some seven weeks into term when the fetus died. Its sex was not disclosed. Kiyoshi Furukawa, the grand master of the Crown Prince's household, complained that "extraordinary stress had been placed on Princess Masako, in particular by one newspaper's reporting of her possible pregnancy before formal confirmation." Whatever lifts Japan from its long recession, it is not likely to be the early news of another royal pregnancy.

Burdening a woman approaching the threshold of middle age with the survival of the world's oldest dynasty is widely seen as monstrously unfair, as well as very likely counterproductive. "We must think seriously about the danger the succession is facing," the royal historian Hiroshi Takahashi warns. Drastic measures have been proposed, mostly in whispers by people like my neighbors. In-vitro fertilization and surrogate motherhood, the modern equivalent of concubinage, are legally untested in Japan, especially insofar as they affect inheritance. No member of the royal family has ever been divorced or remarried, and divorce, besides offering no guarantee of a male heir, is plainly the last thing the couple want. Another suggestion has been quietly discussed: Why not allow females to accede to the throne? Masako's nieces, Princesses Mako and Kako, would be instant candidates, and Princess Masako and her husband could then get on with their marriage in peace. Polls say that a majority of the Japanese people would find this acceptable.

There are formidable obstacles, however, which no one in Japan has yet fully or publicly addressed. A reigning empress would have to have a husband, or the imperial line would end with her. To avoid inbreeding, her husband would have to be from a different, non-royal family: the many Suzukis, say, or Hondas. The 1947 Imperial Household Law ruled out this possibility because the parliament, with American prodding, worried that a male imperial consort might overstep his role and become politically—or, worse, militarily—active, and this concern has not gone away. In post-bubble-economy Japan, moreover, the royal family aside, it would not be easy to find a prominent family without a stain, however distant, of financial irregularity. Prince Naruhito was wise to choose his wife from the Foreign Ministry, which is virtually the only ministry still relatively free of scandal.

There is another barrier against the idea of a reigning empress. The royal families of Europe, for the most part, ultimately trace their lineages back to the chiefs of the war bands that invaded the disintegrating Roman Empire. Once kings were no longer expected to lead armies into battle, a queen could do the job—which consists mostly of opening parliaments, dedicating buildings, reviewing troops, pinning on medals, and upstaging aspiring dictators—at least as well as, and often better than, the run of kings. Japanese emperors, however, owe their throne not to success in battle but to their Shinto religious office.

Why must the high priest of the national cult be male when the Sun Goddess herself is female? Only since the harsh laws criminalizing lèse-majesté were repealed, after the Second World War, has this question even been permitted, and discussion has centered on a strange ancient rite, the Great Food Offering, which every new emperor must perform shortly after his accession, and which involves, in non-religious terms, passing a night alone with only the goddess as dinner company. (The goddess is in the sky during the day and thus unavailable.) I witnessed the most recent Great Food Offering, performed in Tokyo on a clear starry night, November 22 to 23, 1990—witnessed what I could, that is, from my position behind a police barrier a hundred yards away. During my chilly vigil, all I saw was a figure in white silk—presumably the Emperor—flitting from one small building to another. It took perhaps ten seconds in all. No wonder most of the foreign press stayed in bed.

The Great Food Offering (*daijosai*, in Japanese) was first recorded in 712 A.D., and, as far as the records reveal, apart from the emperors themselves, no human has witnessed the most intimate part of the ceremony. There is thus much uncertainty about what actually takes place. According to a handout from the Imperial Household Agency, "The new Emperor, for the first time after his enthronement, offers newly-harvested rice to the Imperial Ancestor"—the Sun Goddess—"and the deities of Heaven and earth and then partakes of the rice himself, expresses gratitude to the Imperial Ancestor and these deities for peace and abundant harvests, and prays for the same on behalf of the country and people." The rite takes place in two identical temporary shrines erected a few yards apart on the Tokyo palace grounds—simple huts, of unpeeled logs, that have rough matting walls and are lighted by oil lamps. The setting clearly recalls the forest hut in which the legendary first emperor, Jimmu, would have communed with the Sun Goddess at his own *daijosai* more than two millennia ago. And—in form, at least—it resembles the thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest practiced by many cultures. Why, then, the secrecy? There is nothing in the official description that could not be tastefully televised, like a Western coronation or a Presidential inauguration. Tokyo rumor has it that something of a symbolically sexual nature, which a reigning empress might feel disinclined to perform, takes place.

The huts are furnished with what are officially described as "throne-couches" but looked, to this Western eye, anyway, remarkably like beds, and the emperor, according to one account, is naked at some point during the rite—although the gossips may have confused the Great Food Offering with a ritual bath, a symbolic purification, that the emperor takes before the ceremony.

The truth seems to involve a clash of the spiritual and the political. At the culmination of the Great Food Offering, the emperor, alone with the goddess, is believed to absorb some of her spirit and to become a kind of living ancestor of the entire Japanese family. (This is the theology behind the pre-1945 claim that the emperor himself was a god.) When Emperor Hirohito renounced his divinity, he was careful not to deny his direct descent from the Sun Goddess; without it, he would have no claim to the throne. Japan's postwar constitution (largely American-written), however, enjoins the separation of state and religion, and nowhere mentions the Shinto faith. When Akihito came to the throne, this ominous silence in the constitution left the royal ritualists in a quandary. Without the infusion of the divine spirit, he could not, in the eyes of traditionalists, be the emperor, the head of the Japanese family. To start afresh, to remove the Sun Goddess from the accession rite and remake Japan's monarchy on European, equal-opportunity lines, with the possibility of a reigning empress, would risk unravelling the coalition of modernists and traditionalists that makes the institution so popular and effective. Procrastination and secrecy were, as they often are, Japan's solution, and they have solved little—as the country saw recently when, just weeks after assuming office, the new, stopgap Prime Minister, Toshiro Mori, took it upon himself to remind a group of Shinto-supporting legislators that Japan was still a "divine nation centered on the emperor." Mori was expressing the traditional view, which has never been officially contradicted, but to Japanese pacifists, modernists, Christians, Buddhists, and leftists, not to mention Japan's Asian neighbors—all of whom suffered under the military incarnation of Shinto—this sounded like a return of Japan's dark past, and Mori's chances of living down his indiscretion before the next elections, on June 25th, are slim. One of the reasons that Japan has not resolved the issue of the emperor's semi-secret religious role in fifty years, Hiroshi Takahashi says, "is the taboo that has become associated with the discussion of the emperor among the Japanese people." A decade after the last Great Food Offering, that old taboo has trapped a brilliant young woman in an unenviable plight.

*"Thursdays and Saturdays, it's glassblowing, Mondays and Wednesdays it's Morris dancing!"*

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What do Princess Masako and Prince Naruhito make of this cruel tangle of law, tradition, and superstition? Stoical endurance is the samurai way, and Masako has made no public comment. In December, as always, she composed her entry for the Imperial Poetry Contest. She missed the reading in early January, having just come out of the hospital, but the Prince was there to hear the couple's poems on this year's set theme, Time, recited by a sonorous-voiced palace official. The Prince's poem takes workmanlike pride in a Japanese achievement:

> Transcending distant time and space
> the world of stars we now see
> is explored by Subaru.

(This is not the car company but the Japanese-built telescope on Mauna Kea, in Hawaii. *Subaru* means the Pleiades, for which both the car and the telescope are named.)

Princess Masako followed her mother-in-law in choosing love, this time the conjugal kind, as her subject:

> With my husband as my guide through these seven years,
> Our words of the heart grow deeper with each passing day.

There was nothing in her poem about goddesses and shamans, politics, or dynastic complications. Only what another anguished poet, William Wordsworth, called "the still, sad music of humanity." ♦

## FICTION

# FORECAST FROM THE RETAIL DESK

### BY RICK MOODY

Nobody likes a guy who can foretell the future. Let me say that right off. A guy with foreknowledge of events. It's like having really bad acne. I had that, too. You'll need clinical trials, probably. *The bull market will come to an end*, for example. Any idiot will tell you that, and yet a persuasive demonstration of my skills requires that I start small and build to a spectacular conclusion. The Dow, in spite of its reliance on blue-chip issues, will chase Nasdaq's tail down. My own employers will come face to face with some nasty accounting practices that lead straight to a cadre of cocaine-snorting, Lexus-driving tech-fund specialists. Then some really bad international loans will surface. *Jesus, make a loan to Canada or something*. My position here at the retail desk, where I am not well liked, will be one of the first to be declared obsolete in the merger. They'll let me know early on a Monday, after I've been up for three consecutive nights, worrying about my brother's kid, who has leukemia.

I tell my wife this stuff. She doesn't believe me.

Here's a historical account of the first ever public demonstration of my skills: I told Bobby Erlich that he was going to get paralyzed in a motorcycle crash. This was in 1977. Erlich didn't like motorcycles or mechanical stuff of any kind. He had a tentative approach to the sciences, too, though we were sequestered, in chemistry, at the pleasure of the New York State Board of Regents. The laboratory tables were always marbleized, always black, swept clean of hazardous accumulations. Songbirds in our town, New Rochelle, sang parochial songs, jingles, light fare. The windows were open. It was late autumn. The chemistry teacher, Miss Rydell, said, *Bobby, you work with Everett, here*. No one else would work with me. Not even the two Hispanic kids. A pairing off had transpired, boys of incredible beauty with girls as perfect as in the Old Masters. What was my crime? Bobby Erlich, that blond, said nothing, accepted a glass beaker from Miss Rydell, shoved past me toward the lab station. At the beginning of the experiment, sodium and water in equal parts, I smiled genially at Bobby and thanked him for working with me, but this was simulated, because when he still wouldn't talk, wouldn't collaborate, I had no choice but to deliver his fate, which came to me with the sort of uncanny trembling that you associate with early stages of fever, as if foresight and shingles, or chicken pox, were identical: *You're going to get maimed in a horrible motorcycle accident. It's really going to hurt, too. The part you can feel, anyway. Just remember we had this chat.*

*Know what, Bennett?* said Erlich. *I always thought you were a jerk. And I was right.*

The exchange in its entirety. Two lines. Had I known what was going to happen, I would have feigned illness and taken a city bus home, lugging my ring binder, my unused baseball glove, and the remains of my bag lunch. Why worry about the opinion of Bobby Erlich? I could just as easily have said something polite. Nevertheless, class proceeded without incident despite discord between lab partners. Miss Rydell hummed as she circulated from station to station. We performed the experiment, I balanced the equation in my notebook—Erlich didn't know how to do it—I passed our results to the front of the class. We got an A on the homework, and afterward Bobby avoided me wherever possible, especially in chemistry class. I would see the rear view of him in the cinder-block corridors, a faded red backpack retreating.

Eventually, Erlich turned out to be, well, *gay*, the preferred colloquialisms in those days being *fag*, *mo*, *felcher*, *queer*, and so forth. Foreknowledge of his blossoming condition would have been possible among my prognostications, though in truth I had a basis for my surmises—namely, that Erlich had been repeatedly beaten and tortured by the *lobotomized physical-education students* of my school, most of whom are now plumbers with collections of child pornography taped inside their vans, or this seemed to be the implication at our recent twentieth reunion. Anyhow, I didn't tell Erlich he was gay, I just told him he would be maimed in a motorcycle accident, and the year passed, and I was grateful every time I saw Bobby on the way to band practice, where he was first flute, or easing into the greenroom backstage at one of his beloved high-school dramas. (I was property master for several of the shows that year.) I was grateful because Bobby was intact.

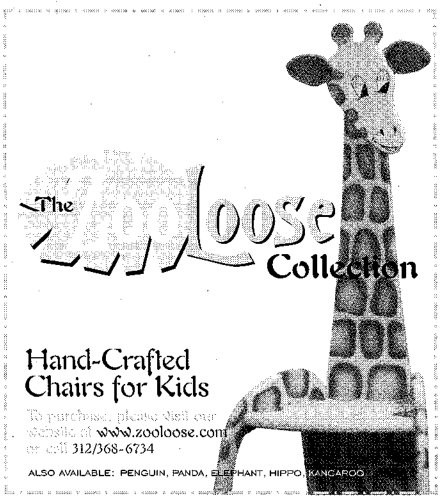
Then we were seventeen. An age of promise, an age of adventures, intoxications, epiphanies. Bobby Erlich the seventeen-year-old meanwhile seemed to be having an *intergenerational romance*, that was the rumor, and one night he was riding in an Olds Cutlass Supreme beside this off-duty policeman from our town, a policeman with a wife and kids who nonetheless had found himself all dizzy over a flute-playing, theatre-obsessed boy from the junior class of the local high school. It was rainy. It was June. That intersection at Four Corners was, and is still, noted for scofflaws trying to make it to the station before the local train pulled out. Bobby and his policeman were locked in a kiss at a stoplight, a devouring kiss, and I would like to think that in spite of my robust heterosexuality I could render that kiss for you. The instant eclipsed all the years of Bobby's woeful adolescence. It was *interstellar*. It was *pantheistic*. He wanted to see Meineke's locker, at the police station. He wanted his own dogeared photo of Meineke as a little boy.

LEWIS KOCH, "FATHER/NUCLEAR FAMILY TRIPTYCH" (1986)

However, as they were sundering themselves from this embrace, Joey Kaye's father, who was coming home impaired from a nearby tavern, was trying to catch the tail end of a yellow traffic signal. Joey's dad: *thirty-eight miles per hour on a street zoned for thirty.* In a Honda Civic. He struck the passenger side of Meineke's Olds and was uninjured, since drunk. Meineke, except for a few hematomas and his reputation, was also O.K. Not so Bobby. Lots of witnesses could corroborate this account. Melissa Abdow, for example, was on the corner, eating mint chocolate chip in a sugar cone (it was dripping badly). She told me the next day. She had a sequence of images lodged in her brain, she said, like evidentiary photos: *Bobby in the front seat of the car, smiling, then Bobby curled around the mashed engine of the Olds, which was right up in the front seat of the other car. Then the Jaws of Life.*

I didn't visit him in the hospital, since, like I say, he couldn't stand me. But I should have visited him, because instead I was spending weeks in my room, gorging on remorse. Could it be true? Did language, when you petitioned with it, cause such devastations as Bobby's crash? Did the stuff you mumbled on a bad day in chemistry class despoil the family of a policeman who happened to like boys but hadn't yet told his wife, and was then undeservedly pulled mostly uninjured from the detritus of his car alongside the paralyzed body of an underage flute player? Did I cause all that? It was supposed to be a *joke!* And, besides, I said *motorcycle crash!* If only I had played football, if only some hulking alcoholic wife-batterer in the Pop Warner League had cared enough about me to make me feel like I was more than a barnacle at New Rochelle High, then I wouldn't have had to do what I did; if only I had played football, and had heard, at the line of scrimmage, the crunch in which my own neck buckled, in which the ether above me gave way and I heard the hoarse commands of stretcher-bearers.

Once, I told my mother she was going to inherit a lot of money from an aunt in Lithuania. What did my mother know of Lithuania? She was raised in New Jersey, and she had an Irish surname. Maybe I was trying to get *attention*, as guidance counsellors had it then. Maybe I had an *active imagination*. Maybe I was trying to best my *charming, handsome brother* in the competition for her affections. Maybe it was because my dad had absconded at the first opportunity, back when I was in single digits. Of course, by virtue of my forecasting gift, I realized that my old man had another wife and family elsewhere, in Moline, Illinois, if you're interested. I could see their shrubs and annuals, Siamese cats, sugary breakfast cereals: *it just dawned on me.* I had known this just as I knew that the 1974 Mets would win no more than eighty games.



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Some days in my room, when I had exhausted a stack of pulps and "The 4:30 Movie" was a romantic comedy not to my taste, well, I felt I could *contact* my father, through extrasensory perception. *Dad,* I would say, *this is your son Everett calling, would you be willing to accept the charges? You have now, by my estimation, missed seven of my birthdays, and if you'd like to know my personal feelings about that I guess I would say that it's a little irresponsible, and I wonder if your dad had to blow your childhood environment to smithereens in order to make you the kind of person who could take a seven-year business trip and forget to write.*

If I lied to my mother about the inheritance she was going to receive, it's probably because I worried about her. When she got home each night from the long-term-convalescent home where she was an accountant, she was about as lively as a vinyl footstool. And she had to officiate in the fisticuffs between me and my brother. She played the lottery, when the lottery became state-supported, and I used to see her at the variety store. She'd be counting the grimy singles that she kept in a drawer in the kitchen. She scrawled out numbers based on sentimental remembrances. Occasionally, she took home small purses. I wanted her to have something to look forward to. The point here is that my prophecy is kind of inexact, and you have to use a sort of *metaphoric-analytic schema* (it's in the retail-sales training manual here on my desk) in order to understand exactly how it works its wonders.

A few contemporary forecasts. Cher will contract a grave immune disorder of unknown origins, until she reveals the nature of the voodoo that has so preserved her semblance. I was just making this point to Mrs. Rona Peregrina of Bensonhurst, in fact, while issuing a strong-sell recommendation in the E-merchandising sector. The color *yellow* will become the one color that everyone *has to be seen in.* In the Big Apple, Gotham City, below Fourteenth Street, everyone will start to wear it: canary, lemon, mustard, maize, curry, goldenrod, marigold, sunflower, ochre. Entire discothèques, places I'd never go, yellow, inside and out, the yellow of the power tie, the caution signal, the yellow of foul-weather gear, the yellow of hepatitis.

What else? Books—books will get rare. Your kids will read screens. And the wild language that you used to find in books *or upon stones,* the language of prophecy, like when a guy from Schroon Lake, New York, or Cowan, Tennessee, calls out from his wilderness about how to interpret obscure texts rescued from caves of Egypt, texts that refer to *our last end,* this language will instead be used to write irate letters to owners of television stations who sell zirconium rings to minimum-wage earners across the land. More? Every relationship you ever have, in your entire life, will end in disease. Sound far-fetched? It's not. Today you eat grilled cheese on seven-grain bread, tomorrow you clutch your gut, locate the tumor.

My brother's kid, the one with leukemia, will get sicker still.

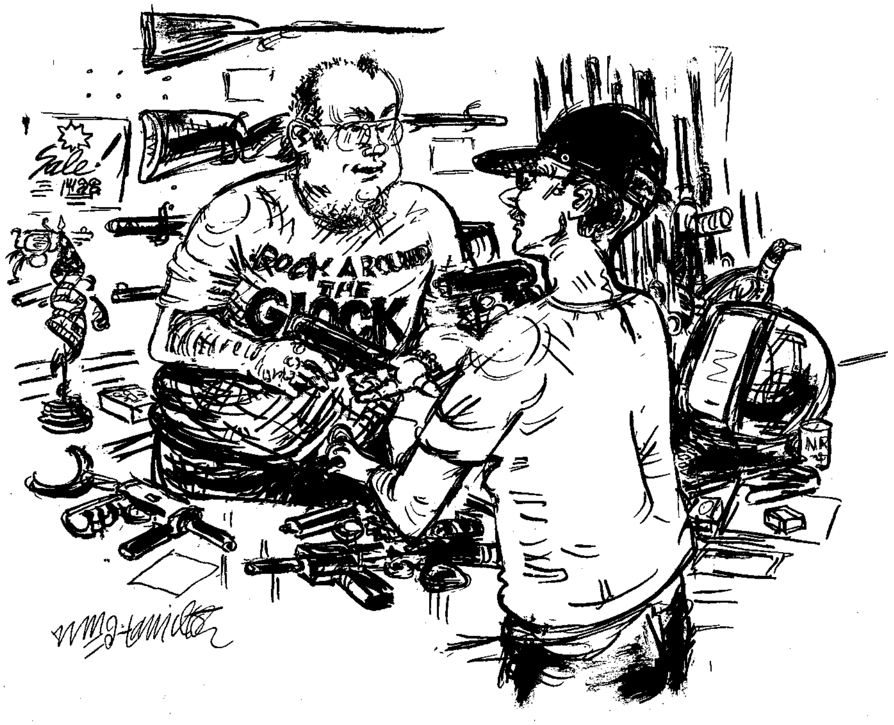
One evening, I was on my way to a basketball game when Bobby Erlich, the paraplegic, *came wheeling into the subway car, displaying his amputated limbs.* O.K., not really. I would often hear the door at the end of the car open, however, and I would think, *Here comes Erlich.* Any desperate life form that entered the space, *Evening, ladies and gentlemen, sorry to interrupt and I don't mean no one no harm but I am homeless and trying to get money for my three kids. I'm currently living here on the trains with my family*—any unfortunate was the harbinger of a celestial accounting for yours truly. *Let there now be penitence.* Know what I mean? That night even worse things came to pass. I had changed for the Seventh Avenue line at Times Square. I was sitting down on the empty bench at the front end of the last car, with a book, probably something required for class at Queens College, let's say Plato's Apologia: *And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and in the hour of death men are gifted with prophetic power.* Besides, nobody on earth messes with you if you're reading the classics. Just as I had arranged myself on this bench and opened my book, I heard a guy coming down the stairs, making a real commotion. *Hold the train! Hold the train!* Ladies swept aside by his assault. You know those stairs at the end of the platform there? How many femurs have become bonemeal on that staircase? How many hips replaced?

*Hold the train.* I could make out his latecomer's face as the doors tintinnabulated and converged. He was smiling. This was the train he needed to catch. This was his quarry. Never mind hindrances that developed, the door being closed, the conductor shutting his window, the train beginning to move. *Hold the train.* I wish he'd said something more compelling, such as *Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.*

I looked up from my book, saw him smiling. I knew right away. I didn't want to know. But, as I've been trying to tell you, my heart was crenellated *with scars of foreknowledge.* He was making for that spot where the plates of the two cars abutted. The train lurched forward, I saw *the smiler* disappear out of the region of my peripheral vision, like a bird of the air lifting off. He wore a smile, he grabbed for the gate, got one leg up, his shopping bag went under, there was a silence, there was exertion, he fumbled for the bag slipping down between the cars, there was a span of blackness, and then he was tumbling after his possessions, *down there.* Holy God. The Apologia fell out of my hands. *When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them.* Then there was that awful hydraulic exhalation that means *This conveyance is not going to move for a while,* this train has met *impediment upon the tracks.* The entire system of trains, all the hundreds of miles of it, all Gotham knew at once, its daily imaginings again including gristle, sinew, marrow, plasma. There had been an *incident.*

Since I was a strapping young man of well over two hundred pounds, closer to two-fifty, to be honest, I was a kind of missile being propelled forward when the train stopped, ready to squash just about anything or anyone. I fell across the aisle there, *into the lap of a woman.* She was irritated at first, she didn't know where we were, in the circle of creation reserved for dismemberment and sorrow, the realm of severed limbs, of triage, and she pushed back against my commodious bulk, *Move, goddammit.* I said, *Hey, excuse me, I'm really sorry, hell.* Then the woman in whose lap I had landed called across the car to an M.T.A. employee powerlessly inhabiting our car, *Is someone on the tracks*? A small Hispanic boy said, clutching at his mother's hand, *What happened*? *What happened*? His mother shook her head.

A long two or three minutes we were locked inside, in our stationary subway car. There were faces pressed up against the outside, a wall of faces, and these faces would look down into that space



*"Are we looking more for target shooting or, like, closure?"*

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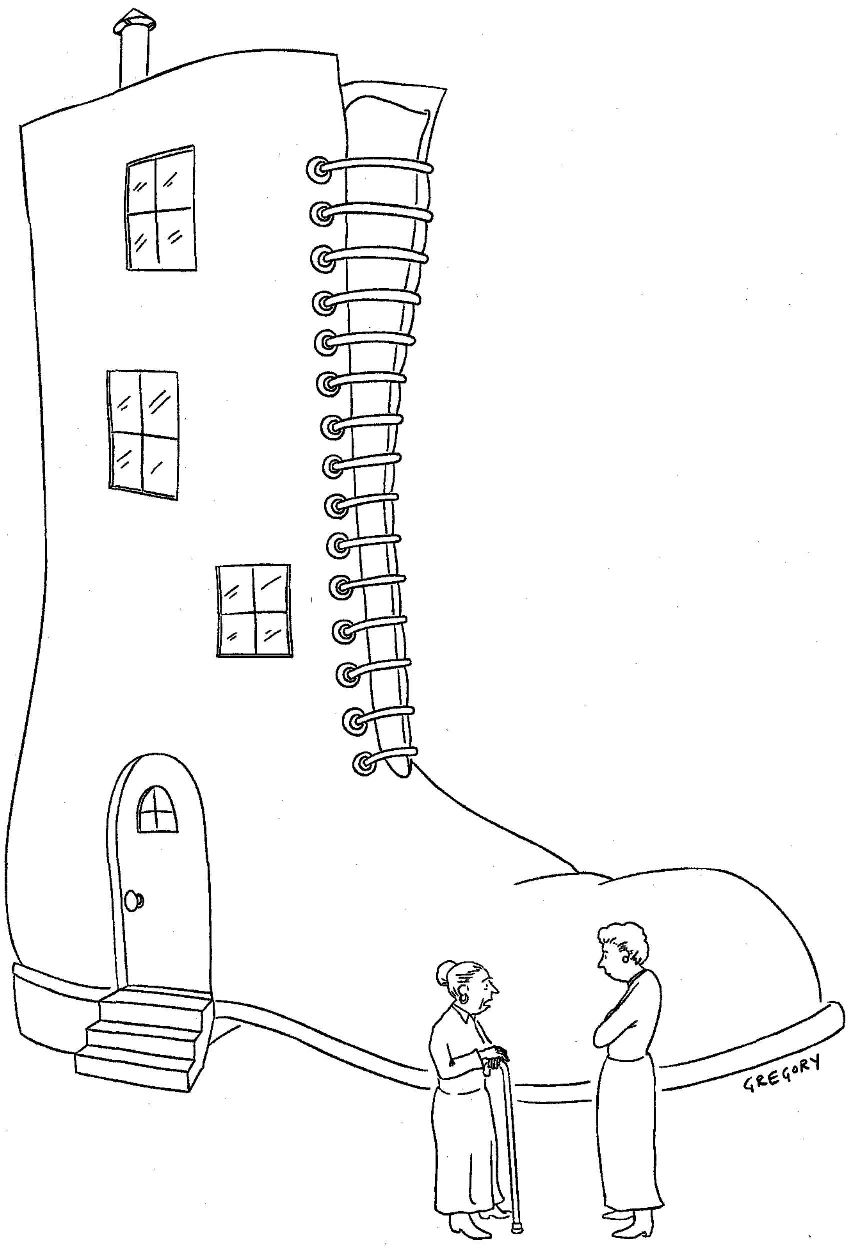


*"Once, I tried to change the laces, and the Landmarks Commission came down on me like a ton of bricks."*

under the train, never satisfied until they had apprehended *why*, and then they would knot uncomfortably at what information they now possessed. I resolved that I wouldn't be one of those people, one of those who *had to see*. When the door at the other end of the car was at last opened from the platform by a man with a high-visibility vestment, people filed off, and an announcement began to cycle on the P.A. *Lassshnnrnd genmhhnhnsssbrs* . . . What a processional, all of us filing out, *Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.* And then, by arrangement of Excellent Destiny, the woman I had nearly crushed touched me on the arm, beside me now in the queue. *Do you think he's all right?*

I thought, since I experienced trauma as a convulsion of the imagination, *Who's the guy's mother and what did he have for lunch and did he ever drive a hydrofoil and did he ever feed a dolphin and how old was he when he lost his virginity and did he know the difference between a coniferous tree and a deciduous one and who was his favorite Yankee and did he know the table of the elements and how many women did he love and did he have a kid brother and did he ever play a musical instrument and what is the woman he was meeting thinking right now and what is his mother thinking and is his head separated from his neck or his leg separated from his hip, his inner organs like stew upon the undercarriage of the express*? Of course, I knew the answers to these questions, even if my step was unsteady, even if I felt like I might pass out. I made a reply to the woman; I said poetical words that had only recently occurred to me. *I have a couple of tickets to the Knicks, they're about to lose to Philadelphia, but I won't tell you the score. I was going to sell one of the tickets anyhow. Let's make something good out of something bad.* I had never ever asked a woman out before.

The emergency guy at the door remarked, *Let's get a move on, pal, we got a situation.*

My wife, because she became my wife—my solace, my destiny, my respite—*detrained*, but she froze on the platform, shoulders trembling suddenly as she held a pulped tissue to her nose, and crowds surrounded us, a gathering of disgruntled New Yorkers, getting home late from the office, or trying to get home late, while down the stairs came the paramedics, with their stretchers. In every part of this story, the stretcher-bearers eventually come. To my wife, I said, *No big deal, if it's too sudden. I'd understand. I just don't feel right tonight. I don't feel like being alone.*

She gave me her number. On the fortieth day of our acquaintance I proposed.

Soon I was living near the water in the Bronx. Not far from City Island. What I loved about that part of the world was how the swamps persisted long after the city planners had tried to do away with them. Co-op City rising out of the swamps, the cattails and the trash, the Bruckner Expressway, kids actually attempting to fish in the rivers—unworried about hepatitis, unworried about PCBs. Old unsteady docks, skiffs that leaked, a clustering of powerboats, all in the shadow of low-cost housing. My wife and I were newlyweds in a little place with a screened-in porch in back and a quarter acre, and I had just got this job on the retail desk, where I attempt to persuade regular folks to gamble away their meagre savings.

Every day since I'd been trained I had known I was going to lose my job, and sometimes for weeks at a time I wouldn't allow my wife to touch me because I was so disgusted with who I was, with the bands of useless pork on me, with my unmasculine breasts, with my joyless prognostications.

My brother Jack refused to speak to me in the cinder-block halls of New Rochelle High, unless those halls were empty, unless we were alone, and even then he would answer only *yes* or *no* to questions having to do with what time we were to be picked up, or the hour of a certain dentist appointment. Any idea what it is like to grow up the homely older brother of the most revered kid on your block? Or to look at the basketball hoop in the driveway and see your brother sailing past it, in slow motion, grinning an unspeakable grin, dunking the ball with his off hand, finishing a soda, lighting a firecracker, all at the same time, while the Cosa Nostra kids from up the block curse under their breath for having again lost the two-on-one? Any idea what it's like having your own brother beat you in a drug deal, in which he sells you a mixture of oregano and fresh basil and then, to give credence to his salesmanship, smokes some of it with you and comments on its potency?

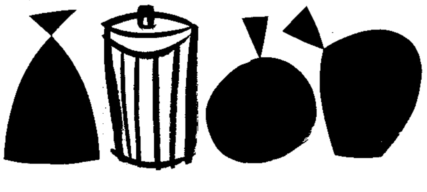
My brother never liked me, as he never liked American cars, black jeans, health food, girls without makeup. My brother Jack never liked to talk about what didn't go his way, or about our father, or about my *second sight*. He was handsome. He liked tailored suits. He liked his socks to match his shirt.

*I am well pleased with my two sons*, my mom said wearily when the two of us fought, like the time I chased him around the entire house with an axe, cursing, threatening, *I'm going to bury this thing in your skull, and then I'm going to watch your brains run out and I'm going to eat your brains.* He locked himself in the bathroom, and I was banging on the door with the dull side of the axe, until I managed to put the axe *through* the door, and he was yelling, *Christ, he's insane, Mom, can't you get him to back off*? My mother waited patiently, until the hitch in my swing, the dormancy in me, when I turned to her. *Why has everything been so easy for him*?

My brother Jack and I fought for the next ten years, as I correctly predicted, threats shouted at holidays, even after I met my wife, even after my marriage ceremony (my best man was Joey Kaye, the guy whose dad paralyzed Bobby Erlich for life). My brother was late for the wedding because he'd been at a club in the Village called Silver Screen, where he said whatever he had to say in order that he might persuade Elise, an alcoholic, to go to a motel in Yonkers with him, where he was doing lines with her on a pocketbook mirror and watching motel pornography, the swooping arc of enhanced breasts, a nipple coming in and out of focus, simulated yelps of longing. He had never seen a girl with such large tattoos, and in such unusual spots. Was it her or was it the actress on the screen who was so vocal? Elise wanted to be an actress, and her cousin had *incested* her, but she made Jack phenomenally happy for two hours, and he her, at least until they ran out of their talc, and then when she woke in the morning my brother was back at the car dealership, moving the *Beamers*, as he said, wearing a double-breasted Armani suit, totally forgetting that he was supposed to be at my wedding. I know all these things.

One day some years later, who should come knocking at the back door but my brother Jack, wearing clothes that eerily resembled the garb of detectives from a popular television show of the period: a designer suit in pale blue and a polyester T-shirt of dusty rose. He was at the back door, see, while my wife and I were eating devilled eggs and sprigs of parsley; here he was, wearing pastel colors, smiling in a way that signalled *bad news ahead*.

*What's he doing here*? my wife said, loud enough that he would not mistake the words. She'd never forgiven him about the wedding. She rose up from the table on the porch, her green paper napkin still tucked in her neckline, and hastened indoors, where she turned on some opera, loud.



Jack rapped on the aluminum siding, though I was two feet away. We were in plain sight of one another.

*Who do you think it is*?

*Oh, hey. A long-lost relative. A good-looking guy with a flimsy pretext.*

*Thought I'd drop by.*

*So you did.*

*What the hell's going on*? He attempted. *I wanted to say that I feel bad about things, you know*? *I feel bad about things and I want to straighten it out. I thought I'd come on over and we'd have a talk. We could set things right again, hoist a few beers together. Talk about it all.*

He was still out on the step, and he was shading his eyes, though wearing sunglasses. He had a scrape on his cheek. There was an earnestness to his simulations.

*That'd be great*, I said, *but Tanya and I have an engagement, if you want to know the truth, so I only have a couple of minutes.*

*What kind of engagement*?

*Precious Jewels and Stones Show. At the Coliseum. Going to be a big rush on the first day.*

It went on like that, each of us maneuvering for a purchase. One guy makes a slip, the other guy grabs for the handhold, crowds in. Soon my brother Jack began to warm to his ulterior motive. He was always a guy who couldn't sit still for long.

*Why don't you come out front*, Jack said. *I got something I want to show you.*

The screen door slapped at its frame. I figured I'd get it over with. We went around the alley, between Fratelli's place and ours. Fratelli's garden hose coiled by the edge of his lawn. Fratelli's excessively healthy floribunda, a spigot on the side of our house still dripping, though I had put a washer in there only a week before. I wanted a life with a minimum of fuss. *Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes.*

It was a gold Porsche.

Mergers in the automobile business will continue apace, and soon General Motors will be making Bentleys, and the same barely functioning engines that are under the hoods of American cars will be under the hoods of fancy foreign models, and it will be good for stock prices, and even good for the gross national product, but not good for cars

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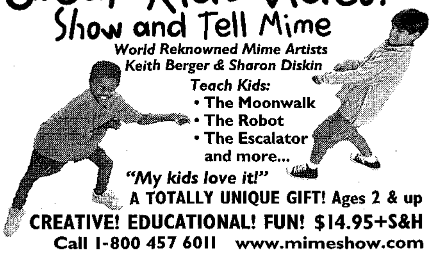

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themselves. That's the limit of my interest in the subject. What's a car, my fellow-Americans, but a system for conveyance, as I was recently telling Sasha Levin of Forest Hills, before she had time to complain about her underperforming account. I'll buy any car, a Reliant K, a Breeze, a Cavalier, I don't care too much, and Tanya doesn't, either, and we tend to leave bottles rattling around in the footwells in the back seat, to take up the space where the kids might have gone. A Porsche to me is just another car, and mainly I saw behind it some Organized Crime Figure or Junk Bond Trader who rode your bumper, who talked on a cell phone while flipping you the bird. I didn't want to have anything to do with Porsches, or Jaguars, or Corvettes. I looked back at my house. I saw my wife, Tanya, in a window upstairs. A curtain fell across her face.

*Isn't she a beauty?* my brother said hurriedly. He meant the car.

*What the hell are you doing showing me this Porsche? Let's get this over with, O.K.?*

*What's the rush?*

It was dented up. In a way that, for me, exactly recalled an earlier car crash and an earlier victim, which is to say that the passenger side was mashed, one headlight completely eliminated, and I'm pretty sure the axle was bent and the front fender mangled up in there, rubbing against the oil pan. There was fluorescent gunk running in my driveway.

*I just hosed this driveway.*

*Hey, I'm sorry,* Jack said. *Listen, I just want to know if I can park this in your garage for a couple of days.*

I looked at my Timex with imitation-cordovan strap and wondered *why thirteen minutes* for this request. He had his own car dealership, where he worked, and his own auto mechanics who would bang out a few dents, no questions asked, and he had always boasted that he could get an inspection sticker for me *easy.* It was not a good sign, his request, and I asked why I had to have this car in my garage, and he said that he'd busted it up right nearby here, out on the river road, and he had things to do, and some points on his license, and just wanted to leave it for a couple of days, wouldn't be any trouble, and he'd buy me a case of beer or something to make it worth my while.

The interior of the Porsche was a ruddy leather, and there seemed to be blood on the dash, on the molded foam, there was a tiny dried splotch of blood from where some forehead had collided with the windshield, and I squinted at it discerningly, at the inevitability of another life coming to an end, the failure of it, of life leaking out on the leather.

*Is this blood in this car?*

*What the hell are you talking about?* my brother replied.

*I asked if this was blood.*

*There's no blood in the car. I don't know what you're talking about.*

Why was a spillage of blood always an emblem of my troubled march in this world, why these pieces of bodies, these cascading morsels of corporeal material, why, in my dreams, the stretcher-bearers, the high-impact collisions, again and again, why the spectacle of young men running into stationary objects, why the lamppost with the D.U.I. wrapped around it, a hand separated from a wrist by some fifty feet, vertebrae like popcorn scattered across the bucket seats?

I said, *Get your goddam car out of here now, what do you mean by bringing this thing around here? Did you kill someone in this car? Am I accessory to all your blunders? Like I don't have enough blunders of my own?* I started loud, admittedly, but I got quieter, because I *knew,* in the middle of my tirade I knew, this fragmentary bunch of people, this collection of lost souls, my family, they were rushing further off now, like some distant hurtling margin of the negatively spherical universe, and when this conversation was over they would be *impossibly far away*—cousins, aunts, uncles, of old bipolar Eire, my father. There would be only my mother's death left to survive, my mother alone in her little house in New Rochelle one block over from a shuttered Main Street, and when my brother climbed into his Porsche—which had a left front flat, I now saw—the last of my uncertain futures would be certain.

With a fluttering of his pinky-ringed hand, my brother tried to get me to play cool. *I'm gone before you know it. Man, if I came here singing songs of love, even then you'd bounce me out on my ass.*

Now the backing away of my brother Jack, blond dealer of exotic high-performance cars, future dealership owner. I waited for the threatening language, but the silence of his departure was instantaneous. *I will not punish your sons when they commit whoredom.* I knew, I knew. I knew where the police would find the body of poor Elise from the club called Silver Screen, out by the woods at the edge of the golf course in Pelham Bay Park. There's always trouble there, you know, because it's the edge of New York City, it's the beginning of the suburbs, and every threshold must have its darkness, and so Elise, who was *incested* when young, got driven to the edge of this wood, where she drank wine with my brother, and they kissed, and they cavorted, and they lived such lives as I have never lived, and then they took a dirt road there, by the canal, where there were only torched hulks of cars, stripped of all but the smoking exterior chassis—the steering wheel, the steering column, muffler, disk brakes, upholstery, all gone—and my brother, at thirty-four miles per hour on an avenue zoned for twenty-five, drove into a tree, knocked her unconscious, ditched her body, and then after the little visit to me abandoned the stolen car, the car he brought into the city to impress her, or to impress someone like her, and then waded down into the lifeless river just beyond the woods, and dove in, in his Armani suit, drifting downstream, in a narcissistic reverie. Leaving no trail.

Remember Melissa Abdow? The girl who saw Bobby Erlich's crash? Amazing thing. She called last week, at work. (The surfaces of my cubicle are appallingly clean. My Rolodex is blank. Here's a photograph of Tanya wearing a yellow dress.) Melissa wanted a little advice on the inverted yield curve. *What's going to be the effect on treasuries, as a conservative type of investment?* She and her husband were trying to salt away some funds for their kid's college education. And she got my number from somebody who got it from somebody. Research, that morning, had brought in some disappointing news from the markets. It was scrolling across my computer screen. *Full kingdom blessing* on traders of bonds, *they shall run like mighty men. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear.* That I.P.O. for the new Web portal is going to sell out fast. Melissa asked about my brother. *How's Jack, anyway?* Something in my tone made her ask, I knew, and yet I couldn't stop myself. If it's possible for a voice to have worry lines, Melissa's voice had them when she was speaking to me. *My brother? My brother, Melissa?* I started and I couldn't stop. I admitted that I hadn't seen my brother in years, seven years, that he had married a lovely girl, Elise, and I didn't go to his wedding, you know, *I smote you with blasting, and with mildew,* because I was ashamed; he had smashed up Elise's brother's Porsche not long before the ceremony, cut himself kind of badly, I told Melissa, and he came to me for aid and counsel, and I drove him out of the house, *and you know how it is with brothers, Melissa, you know how it is.*

My wife keeps calling down the basement staircase to where I'm sitting, enveloped in darkness, tightening woodscrews on a small racing car that I have made for my nephew, Danny. I have made him many toys. *A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains,* the bugs are kind of bad down here, *Take me up and cast me forth into the sea.* This basement with its cinder blocks and its exposed bulb, this suits me. Seven years now, a Biblical interval, and it was just a little thing. I was a jumpy, anxious person, hard to get along with, I suppose; amazing that I have kept my job this long, when I cannot be comforted. It was just a car that I refused to have in my garage, you would think that it could be forgotten, and yet I haven't even set eyes upon my brother's boy, except in that Christmas card that came this last year (his hair like a crown of goldenrod), and there's Elise, with the strawberry highlights. I don't get too many cards. It's almost a week now that I have been worrying about the boy, waiting for my brother to call. Our Chevy is gassed up and ready. There was a time when everybody knew the future, but a few wise types elected *to forget what was to come,* as we all elect, eventually, to forget the past. Forgetters raised up many children and made songs of praise: *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.* Please let me be wrong again. About that sick boy. Let me be wrong. ♦

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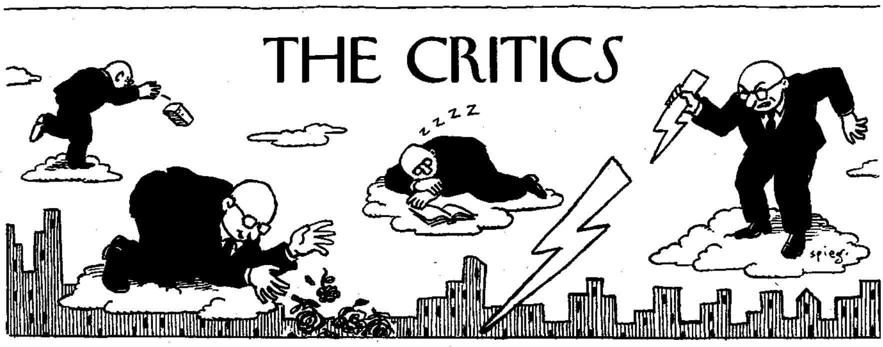


### POP MUSIC

# IT'S A MANN'S WORLD

*Melodies for a darker mood.*

### BY NICK HORNBY

Every month, on a page entitled "All Back to My Place," the English rock magazine *mojo* asks two or three celebrities about their listening habits. It's an unmissable feature—surely everyone wants to know what Spike Lee's favorite album is (it's a toss-up between "Innervisions" and "What's Going On"), or what Sporty Spice sings in the shower (her own songs, as it happens). This month, Ron Mael, from the campy and slightly annoying seventies art-rock band Sparks, answers the question "What music are you currently grooving to?" thus:

> Grooving may not be the most precise definition of my connection to my current musical choices since grooving is usually reserved for pop music and it's quite evident that quality pop music is among the dearly departed. So I'm currently "grooving" to Duke Ellington's "Live at Newport," Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" . . .

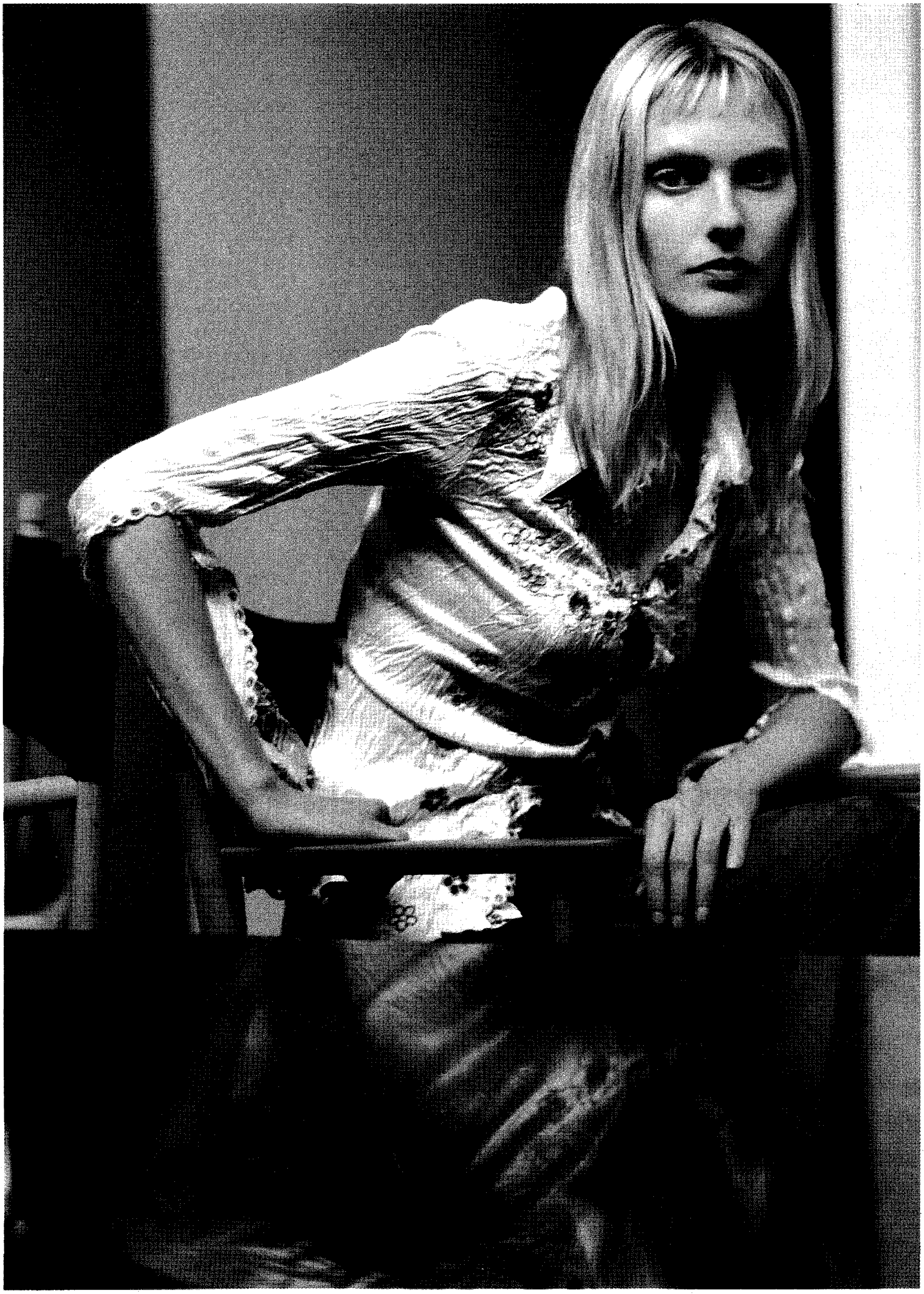
The view is not uncommon, particularly among erstwhile pop musicians of a Certain Age, who seem to have abandoned rock and roll and taken up jazz, or classical music, for reasons I can only guess at: Prokofiev! Ellington! Take that, Hanson and Wu-Tang Clan fans! (One feels an irresistible urge to point out that, even if pop music is "among the dearly departed," Russian Romanticism isn't really happening right now, either.) But if Mr. Mael's view means anything at all, it must be in its assumption that pop music is dead in the way that fiction is supposed to be dead—that both have been superseded by new technologies or by other art forms. Nobody sees pop music (or fiction) as tools of the revolution; no one expects them to change the world.

Meanwhile, good, talented musicians continue to make albums that people continue to listen to, and good, talented authors continue to write novels that people continue to read. In the last few months, there has been terrific new music by the Eels, Kelis, Angie Stone, Neal Casal, Magnetic Fields, Michael Penn, Elliott Smith, Fiona Apple, Josh Rouse. . . . For the most part, this is unshowy, old-fashioned, verse / chorus / verse music, the kind the Beatles or Marvin Gaye or Jackson Browne used to make. All that's missing is the shock of the new—a significant absence, admittedly, but then, if the guitar-based three-minute song is to survive, there is bound to be a period like this one, when it just settles into its skin and becomes a means of expression like any other.

The trouble is that pop doesn't know how to sell itself in this way. Aimee Mann is a fine, occasionally brilliant singer-songwriter, nothing more, nothing less, and this plainness of purpose has cost her dearly over the last fifteen, mostly calamitous, years. During the first stage of her career, her band, 'Til Tuesday, had only one hit, the very eighties synthpop tune "Voices Carry." She hated it, took over the band, and, in then making two wonderful Beatles-tinged pop-rock records, "Welcome Home" and "Everything's Different Now" (both bombed), drove it into oblivion. There was then a five-year hiatus before she produced her first solo album, "Whatever," but just as it was released her record company lost its major distributor; she transferred to Geffen, but it was soon taken over by Seagram, and she ended up having to buy her new recordings back. This resulted in yet another gap, of three years, before the next album. Mann has felt bitter and cursed, and many of her songs are expressions of her anger at the music-business executives who, she believes, have hampered her career. "All you wanna do is something good," she sang on the last track of her 1996 solo album, "I'm with Stupid" (the title was itself a sly dig at her employers), "So get ready to be ridiculed and misunderstood./ 'Cause don't you know that you're a fucking freak in this world?" Self-pity has rarely sounded so attractive.

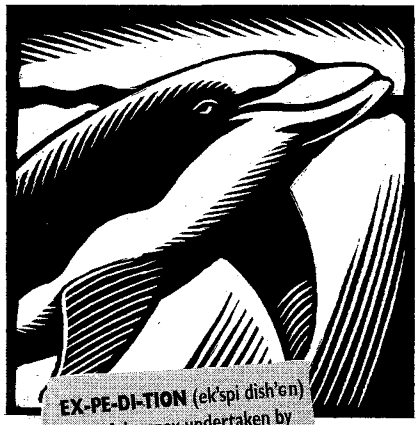
Part of Mann's trouble is that, though she writes her own songs and sings them, she is not what we've come to expect a female singer-songwriter to be. She plays guitar, not piano, but she is not one of the lads, like Sheryl Crow; she is outspoken rather than introspective, which means that she has little in common with the Carole King school; and she is much too grown-up and circumspect to want to bare her pain in the way that Tori Amos and Fiona Apple do. Earth mother, rocker, fruitcake—these are the jobs rock music has for white adult women at the moment, and as Mann has shown no interest in applying for any of them (she's had her eye on Paul McCartney's nice, comfortable office for some time), she has found herself marginalized.

Now, suddenly, life is looking up, thanks in no small measure to Paul Thomas Anderson, the director of "Magnolia," who built a couple of the movie's set pieces around Mann's music, wrote dialogue from the opening couplet of one of her songs, and then handed the soundtrack album over to her. In the liner notes, he explains how, in making the movie, he merely "sat down to write an adaptation of Aimee Mann songs." Mann was not, it turned out, as unrecognized and undervalued as she had believed; indeed, she was nominated for an Oscar this year. (She didn't win, of course. Phil Collins did—



*Who would have thought Aimee Mann's essentially mainstream pop would become so alternative? Photograph by Cliff Watts.*

BAJA



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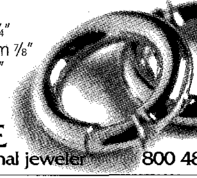

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a hilarious instance of cloth-eared injustice, which is good news for those who love Mann's brand of exquisitely tuneful complaint.) Right on the heels of the "Magnolia" soundtrack, she has another album—like London buses, you wait for three years and two turn up at once. "Bachelor No. 2" was to have been available only on the Internet (such modest hopes being typical of Mann's despair), but the renewed interest in her work is so great that you can now walk into a record store and buy it. What have things come to when the ability to purchase a CD over the counter by one of America's sparkiest musical talents is a cause for celebration?

"Bachelor No. 2" is Mann's strongest collection to date: there are at least half a dozen songs here that will wriggle themselves into the part of your brain reserved for tune storage and stay there for many months. Only one, "Nothing Is Good Enough," seems to deal directly with her professional traumas ("Critics at their worst / could never criticize / the way that you do / No, there's no one else, I find, / to undermine or dash a hope / quite like you"), but her bleak and bracing cynicism about our ability to connect with fellow-humans remains gratifyingly intact. "Satellite," a beautiful, tired waltz that echoes James Brown's "It's a Man's Man's Man's World," begins with the line "Let's assume you were right," and you can almost hear the strain in her voice: in Mann's world, other people are very much in the wrong. The first lines of "The Fall of the World's Own Optimist" ("There's no charity in you / and that surprises me"), and of "It Takes All Kinds" ("As we were speaking of the devil / you walked right in / Wearing hubris like a medal"), reinforce the impression that Mann's arguments are geometrically unique in possessing only one side.

There are some people who are irritated by Mann's self-righteous sense of grievance—Greil Marcus recently described her as "still whining after all these years"—but it seems to me that pop music, unlike the music of its elders and betters, is able to provide something for every undignified mood. If Mann's songs are whiny, well, who doesn't feel like whining sometimes? (And Heaven knows they're not the only ones—what is Bob Dylan's "Positively 4th Street" but one long, glorious unresolved moan?) Granted, if you could have only one album a year, and the musician who made it had to be democratically elected, you'd probably feel obliged to vote for someone with a sunnier, more emotionally generous disposition than Mann's. But there isn't only one album a year; there are thousands, and most of them are much less rich and thoughtful than this one.

What makes listening to "Bachelor No. 2" such a treat is Mann's sinuous, Burt Bacharach-like melodies and her verbal facility. "Ghost World" has the kind of lyrics that people don't write very often: simple, direct, sweet, resonant—in other words, proper lyrics, instead of tenth-rate poetry. "Finals blew, I barely knew my graduation speech / With college out of reach / If I don't find a job it's down to Dad and Myrtle Beach," runs the first verse; I've read entire first novels that cover similar territory less effectively. (The song, an achingly pretty lament for a nothing-happening teenage summer, also offers a respite from all the typical Mann finger-pointing.) "Red Vines," meanwhile, is this year's great lost radio hit. It has everything: a gorgeous, understated guitar intro, a swooping and memorable chorus, a preposterously cute piano outro. The epic "Deathly," which will be familiar to those who already own the "Magnolia" soundtrack (there are a couple of crossovers), is the closest Mann comes to musical grandiosity: Michael Lockwood's almost hymnal guitar solo is the aural equivalent of Paul Thomas Anderson's plague of frogs—mighty, savagely beautiful, and somehow redemptive.

"The Fall of the World's Own Optimist" was co-written with Elvis Costello, who shares Mann's interest in the craft of the song, and who has had his own travails with record companies of late. It seems strange that people like Mann and Costello (whose last studio album was a collaboration with Bacharach) should find themselves huddled together for warmth in this way, when all they appear to want is to write classic, essentially mainstream pop. Who would have thought that music like this would become alternative, when it doesn't have an alternative bone in its body? "Bachelor No. 2" is exhilarating proof that there's lots of life in the old dog yet. ♦

## DANCING

# BIRDS OF A FEATHER

*New productions at A.B.T. and N.Y.C.B.*

### BY JOAN ACOCELLA

*Some material has been added to the new "Swan Lake," notably sex and violence.*

ANA JUAN

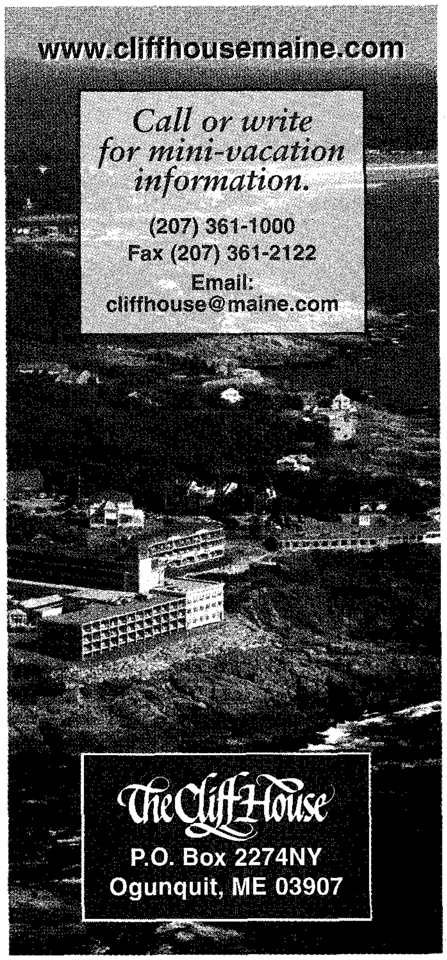
The first question that has to be asked about American Ballet Theatre's new production of "Swan Lake" is "Why?" Since 1967, A.B.T. has had a lovely "Swan Lake," mounted by the Royal Ballet's David Blair on the basis of what remains to us of the 1895 St. Petersburg production. A.B.T.'s administration doted on this "Swan Lake," its first full-evening ballet, the first medal on what was to become its proud chestful of classics. The production was shelved for a while in the eighties, but in 1993 it returned, and everyone was glad to see it again. So why has Kevin McKenzie, A.B.T.'s artistic director, chucked it and made a new version?

Because of the box-office, for one thing. As McKenzie, an honest man, told the *Times*, "Swan Lake" is "one of the very few ballets that sell." And if the old "Swan Lake" isn't filling the house—as indeed few ballets fill that airplane hangar known as the Met—then maybe a new "Swan Lake" will. Another reason has to do with the profile of the current company—above all, its extraordinary power in the male ranks. Ethan Stiefel, Jose Manuel Carreño, Angel Corella, Vladimir Malakhov, Julio Bocca—McKenzie has male stars coming out of his ears, and he's got to use them or lose them. Two years ago, A.B.T. acquired an old Russian ballet, "Le Corsaire," with a bunch of pirates tearing around, brandishing firearms at one another. Why did we need this corny thing? Because it had three leading male roles. And it was a hit. Now look at McKenzie's new "Swan Lake." Not only has the role of the hero, Prince Siegfried, been beefed up; Siegfried's friend Benno also gets an extra dance, and the villain, Von Rothbart, who normally does little more than wave his cape, has been given a long, flashy number and thigh-high purple boots to perform it in. On opening night, McKenzie got Malakhov, an international star, to play Von Rothbart, while the noble Carreño was Siegfried. The house was full, believe me.

Intramural rivalry may also have played a part in this "Swan Lake." A.B.T., in its spring season, performs about twenty paces across Lincoln Center Plaza from New York City Ballet. In the old days, there was limited competition between the two troupes, for they were very different. A.B.T. was the home of the classics—romantic realism. N.Y.C.B. was the home of George Balanchine—modernism. Balletgoers knew which one they wanted, and neither company tried too hard to argue with them. But then Balanchine died, and his successor, Peter Martins, strapped for new repertory, cast an eye on A.B.T.'s classics. In 1991, he created a "Sleeping Beauty"; in 1999, he presented a new "Swan Lake." He clearly had mixed feelings about doing this. Both productions are quick and cold, as if to say, "Here's what you people want, but don't think I'm going to let you wallow in it." The "Swan Lake" has glum, abstract sets and a nasty little ending. Instead of drowning themselves in the lake and going to Heaven together, Odette and Siegfried simply part, she to live on under the spell that has changed her into a swan, he, presumably, to feel like a rat for the rest of his life.

Well, if one ballet director can look across the plaza, so can the other. What if McKenzie, too, created a new "Swan Lake," but a *romantic* one? (His lovers dive into the lake like Olympic swimmers.) And if, in addition, he adjusted the ballet so that it showed off not one but two or three of his house stallions? Why, it would be a hit—like "Le Corsaire" but more respectable. Hence A.B.T.'s new "Swan Lake."

It's not very good, and not very bad. Like Martins, McKenzie has cut the ballet considerably. A number of famous high points are now non-points.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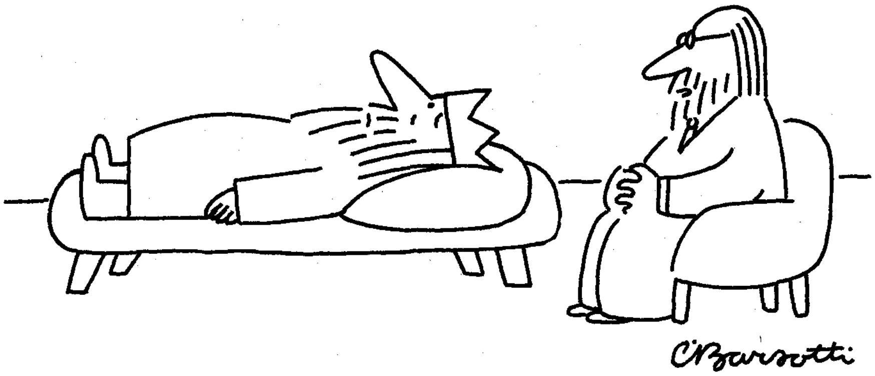

*"Enemies, yes, but doesn't your moat also keep out love?"*

• •

The vision of Odette that appears, plaintively, as Siegfried is about to betray her for her evil counterpart, Odile, is deleted. Siegfried's great, heart-stopping exit at the end of Act III—where Tchaikovsky's score tells us, note for crashing note, how the prince realizes what he's done and tears out of the throne room to go find Odette—is utterly squashed. It's not until the last second that the prince gets going, and by then we've lost patience with him. Guy doesn't even know the story.

At the same time, McKenzie has added some material, notably sex and violence. The fact that Odette was captured by Von Rothbart and changed into a swan is usually related to us as deep background, in a mime passage. McKenzie, like a few "Swan Lake" revisers before him, presents the scene itself, as a prologue. Hippety-hop goes the young princess, gathering flowers or whatever, when, lo, she encounters a fascinating man, and suddenly she is in his arms, frozen in terror. The man is then replaced by a big green devil, and the girl by a swan. Blackout. The theme of sexual enslavement is further developed in the new dance for Von Rothbart, in Act III, where the evil genie mesmerizes, one by one, the four princesses who have come to court as prospective wives for Siegfried. At the end, they are all circling him, ready, it is clear, to perform any low deed he wishes. He leaves them there and runs up the dais, where he plops himself down on Siegfried's throne and, smack on the last note, turns to the queen with a jubilant smile. Sex will win. Odette is doomed.

Such is the story in McKenzie's version. It's an O.K. story, but unfortunately it has been surgically implanted in a grand, hieratic nineteenth-century ballet whose story was something else, something Platonic or Christian, about the spirit. The two don't mix very well, nor are any of McKenzie's other choreographic innovations as impressive as Von Rothbart's dance. On opening night, Carreño, recently injured, danced badly—the first time I have ever seen him do so—and Susan Jaffe (Odette/Odile), also coming back from an injury, looked as though she had taken a bucket of Valium. Things got better the next day, when Angel Corella and Ashley Tuttle stepped in. I have heard it said that Tuttle is miscast as Odette, and maybe that's true. She's a tiny thing; her biggest, achiest arabesque is still not the shoot-the-moon business that we're used to from today's long-line ballerinas. But what she does is serious theatre. Many ballerinas, to characterize the sex-demon Odile, settle for a sort of crenellated smirk. That's what Jaffe gave us. And what Tuttle gave us was a thousand details: a bosom-push here, a dirty little jeté-à-côté there. You could see her thinking, moment by moment: How to snare this dopey prince? I don't care if Tuttle is small, or if she gets tired (which she does). She is an artist.

The final reason we got a revised "Swan Lake" out of A.B.T. this season is that the administration had to come up with something to put in its advertisements. Twyla Tharp contributed a happy new piece, "The Brahms-Haydn Variations," but she has made fourteen pieces for the company; she is practically one of its classics. What A.B.T. needs is a good young choreographer.

That's what every classical company in America needs, but none feels the pinch more than New York City Ballet, because none more than N.Y.C.B. had choreographic innovation as its *mission*. It was once thought that Peter Martins might become a major choreographer. (That was one reason he was chosen to succeed Balanchine.) I don't think anyone still nurses that hope, not even Peter Martins. His early ballets were interestingly dry. His latest ballets are dully dry. Still, he knows what the company once stood for. So every two years or so, for an ongoing enterprise called the Diamond Project, he commissions a series of pieces, mostly from young choreographers. On paper, this is a fine idea, but so far it has produced almost nothing of lasting value—not one of the thirty works created for the Diamond Project in past seasons has survived into this season's repertory—and you wonder whether Martins ever expected it to come to much. (The very word "project" suggests lowered sights: these aren't real ballets—they're just works-in-progress.) This year he has gone a step further, founding what will be an annual three-week choreographers' workshop, the New York Choreographic Institute—it starts this fall—but again he doesn't seem to want us to get excited. He told *Talk* that the workshop will give its participants a chance to fall on their faces: "Screw up. Make a bad ballet." Don't take him literally. What he means, I'm sure, is that the workshop will allow its participants to go out on a limb. But his choice of words is curious, as is the fact that the products of the workshop will not be publicly performed.

Yet it is possible that New York City Ballet, willy-nilly, *has* bred a real choreographer. Christopher Wheeldon, an Englishman, got his training at the Royal Ballet School, in London, and then spent two years with the Royal, dancing the works of Frederick Ashton and Kenneth MacMillan. (This is important. He does not have the crippling sense, as fledgling American choreographers seem to, that Balanchine is the Only Way.) In 1993, he moved to N.Y.C.B., and in 1995 he was given the chance to make a piece for its school. Now twenty-seven, he has choreographed for a number of companies, notably N.Y.C.B. This year he will quit dancing and devote himself full time to choreography. His phone is ringing—he has signed on as a guest choreographer at Boston Ballet, and is also artist-in-residence at N.Y.C.B.—and the press has jumped on him like crazy. *Time* called him "the best young ballet choreographer around."

Considering the competition, that's not saying much. Wheeldon is a diligent student of classical ballet. You look at his pieces, and you can see him going through the syllabus: "Now I master narrative, now I work on partnering, now I tackle the ensemble." He also has good taste in music and a way with dancers, but what we have yet to see in his work is any personal note. We don't know who he is, what he cares about.

Or such was the case until this season. As I write this, the Diamond Project for the year 2000 has debouched five ballets, all of them, as usual, pleasant and forgettable, except one, "Mercurial Manoeuvres," to Shostakovich's First Piano Concerto. The piece is by Wheeldon, and though it bears the marks of his craftsmanship, it is a very weird thing. The outer sections are warlike, then charming, then warlike again. The inner section, the pas de deux, is tender—even cute (a Wheeldon weakness)—and also alarming, as if the world were coming to an end. At its conclusion, the woman reaches out for the man; he walks away. Then everyone comes back and is warlike and charming again. The piece is a mess, God bless it. Maybe this is what Martins meant by screwing up. In any case, Wheeldon, the straight-A student, finally got tripped up, by what may be his own emotions. Go to it, Mr. Wheeldon. Tell us more. ♦

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## BOOKS

# SEASONS IN HELL

*Reflections through unwary eyes.*

### BY HENRY ALLEN

An art professor given to offhand apercus once told me, "You can see the difference between Northern and Southern Europe in Crucifixion pictures. In the Northern ones, the agony is unbearable, all that scrawny attenuation. But by the time you get down to Italy they're quite luxurious—Jesus almost seems to be enjoying himself." I remembered this while looking at three powerful new books of photographs: "Inferno" (Phaidon; $125), by James Nachtwey, an American, and "Migrations" (Aperture; $100) and "The Children" (Aperture; $45), by Sebastião Salgado, a Brazilian. Both men have been justly praised for their years of photographs depicting the horrors of poverty, war, famine, drought, diaspora, and disease—stations of the existential cross that prompt our genuflection but rarely promise redemption.

Nachtwey is more the journalist, known for his daring under fire. A newsclip famous among war photographers shows him with his hair oddly lifted—a bullet is flying through it. He is also noted for the lyrical geometry of his compositions. Salgado is more the artist, bringing light-shafted, big-sky grandeur and luscious ambiguities to his reports of squalor, though he also has the luck of great photojournalists—he happened to be there in 1981 when Reagan was shot. Both photographers exemplify sensibilities of the last quarter century, exalting victims and bystanders, who are shown here in the form of scabbed and crazed Romanian orphans, Filipinos living in garbage dumps, amputees, refugees, bulldozed corpses, Tutsi skulls littering a schoolroom floor, and on and on.

"Inferno" opens with a two-page spread showing a big-eyed, slack-mouthed, beautiful child gripping a crib rail in a Romanian orphanage. Unlike the children to follow, this one (I think it's a boy) has no visible deformity or disease, but Nachtwey signals the darkness and imbalance to come by placing him on the far right of the picture, cutting off a third of his face with the border, and showing nothing in the left half of the picture but a little finger, the crib rail, and blackness. You have been warned.

Then it's on to a picture divided with conspicuous irony—a sore-ridden, emaciated AIDS child on the left, and a jolly toy elephant on the right. Two pages later and we're inches, it seems, from a child's face bearing crusted lesions and a single tear. These compositions are built on the nerve-damaged flatness of postmodern aesthetics. There's a sense of cosmic burnout, as if even the freshest air in Nachtwey's world smelled of ozone.

The next stop is Somalia, with ancient faces of starving children, their foreheads crisscrossed with veins, and page after page of the living and the dead, fly-ridden and askew. Are we numbed? Bruised worse with every picture? Both? The closest Nachtwey comes to showing the possibility of civilization is a section on the Dalit, the untouchables of India, who number, by his count, two hundred million. Degraded and oppressed, the Dalit at least have an intact culture that orders their society, defines their past, and predicts their future. A little girl carries bricks on her head, as she might have done three thousand years ago, and in the background an industrial chimney pollutes the air with black smoke. Men sell fish and cook skewered rats over a fire. Working, living, and enduring, they hardly belong in this book, which quickly returns to the chaos and impossibility of Sudan, Bosnia, Rwanda, Zaire, Chechnya, and Kosovo.

Both Nachtwey and Salgado have troubled some viewers. How dare they make beautiful pictures of horrible things? Both have also been accused of exploitation. Oscar Wilde, thou shouldst be living at this hour when we can worry about people being exploited with photography after they've been bombed, starved, exiled, mutilated, and hacked to pieces with machetes. Nachtwey has said, "When someone's pictures are published in the mass media, they're seen by the people who make the decisions. They realize there's a groundswell of outrage building, and something's got to be done." Of course, something has not got to be done, as Rwanda and Chechnya have reminded us yet again.

Nachtwey was born in 1948, went to Dartmouth, and took an interest in photographs from the Vietnam War—the first of our wars in which photographers had more glamour than the warriors they photographed. He got a freelance assignment to Northern Ireland in 1981, and since then he has chronicled gruesome hopelessness around the world. He gives little hint of the cures or the causes of this misery, beyond an occasional health worker or soldier. The book includes particularly good pictures of snipers, perhaps to hint that he is a sniper of sorts, too.

Nachtwey seems energized by the American illusion that peace and plenty are normal. He sees the wretched as civilization's mutants, like victims of radiation poisoning. Salgado, on the other hand, shows many of the same horrors, but he accepts suffering as the way of the world. "I do not make pictures to give anybody a bad conscience," Salgado has said in the *Times*. "I hope that these pictures can be used as a base for discussion, to put the question about what happens in some parts of the world. It is necessary to have more assistance, more understanding. We can mind the problem of others and not be on the defensive about the problem."

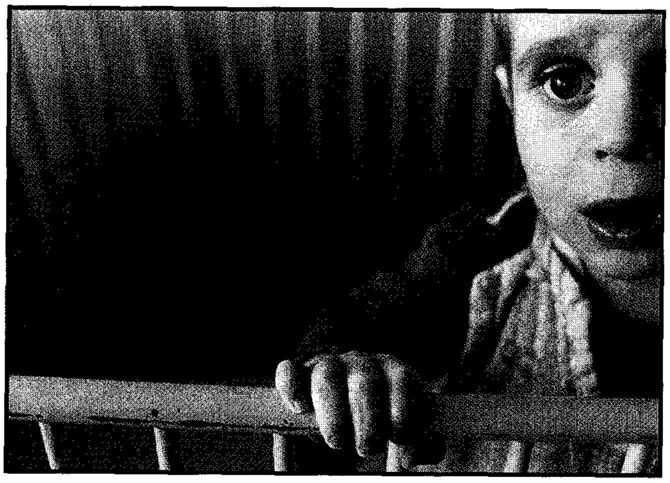
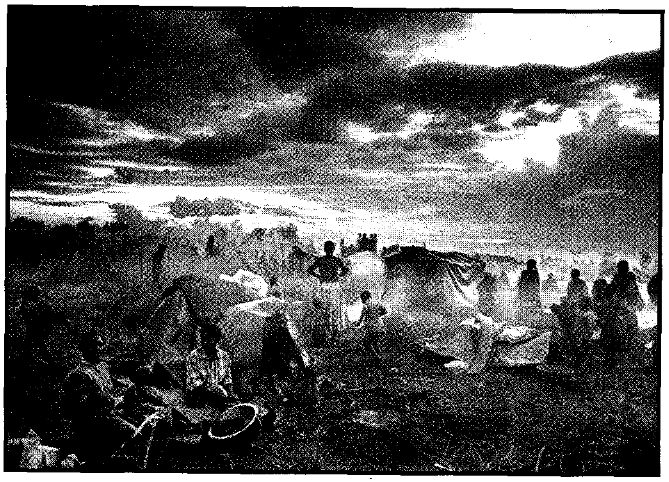
Salgado composes for beauty as much as for effect: driftwood, smoky encampments with tents glowing in the morning light, Bosnian faces like ghosts behind wrinkled plastic, a cloud-rimmed valley, towering sunsets, and—his greatest subject—crowds of people proceeding across the endless earth, hanging on the outside of an Indian train, carrying sacks along a ridgeline in Ecuador, crossing the river between Guatemala and the far shore of Mexico, where they stand tiny beneath giant trees, oddly like aristocrats in the decadent gloom of Fragonard.

NACHTWEY/MAGNUM; SALGADO/AMAZONAS/CONTACT

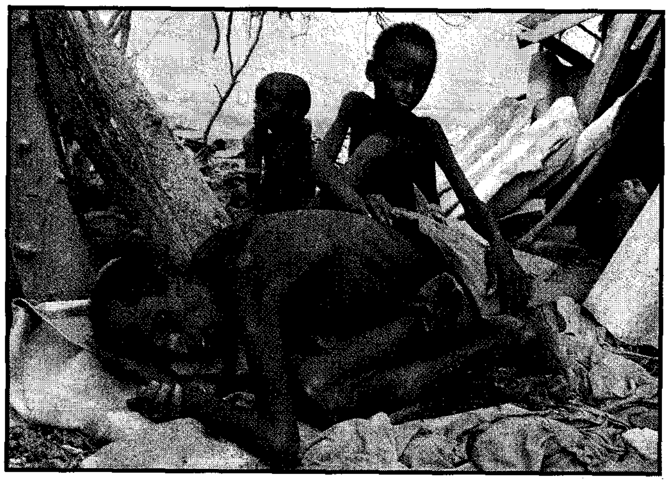
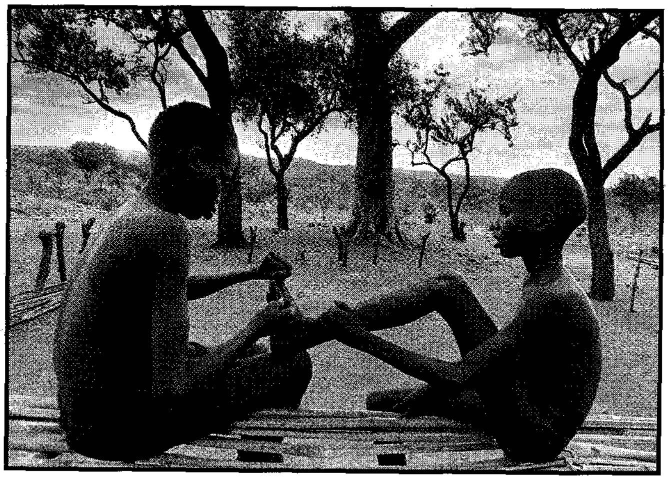
What a glorious picture this river scene is. People hurry, people wait—change and eternity. The river wanders into one of photography's old can't-bust-it compositions: the winding road. Trees rise and drape, push poles intersect the picture plane, and all of it teems with tropical foliage and Jordan-crossing humanity. Everything goes on forever, it seems.

Part of the shock of Salgado's photographs comes from his overturning of landscape ideas as they've proceeded since the Renaissance. For centuries, artists have been driving the people out of their beautiful views. We've come to equate beauty with the absence of mankind—like the friends who tell you their vacation house was wonderful, they went days without seeing another person. Salgado restores the people to the landscape and gives them as much value as the land. He finds sublimity in both, and an epic grandeur of a sort we used to get in the movies of Cecil B. De Mille and David Lean.

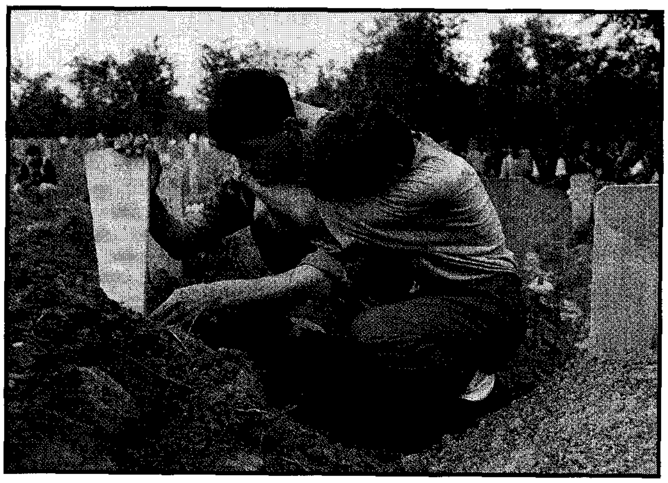
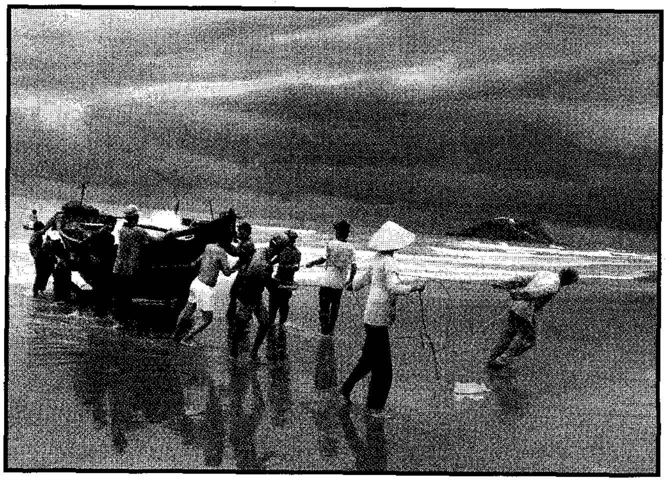
Born in 1944, raised on a cattle ranch in Brazil, and trained as an economist,

*A Romanian orphan stares past James Nachtwey's camera. Right: Sebastião Salgado's landscape of Rwandan refugees in Tanzania.*

*A father in Somalia dying of starvation as his family looks on (Nachtwey). Young Sudanese at a rebel camp (Salgado).*

*Bosnians burying soldiers who died in battle (Nachtwey). Vietnamese on the beach of Vung Tau, near Saigon (Salgado).*

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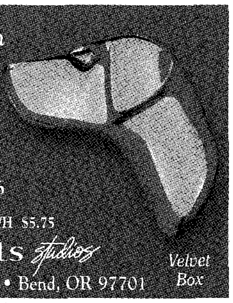

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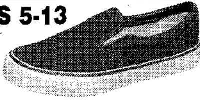


## THE FLIGHT OF LANGUAGE

Some of the leaves stay on all winter
and spring comes without knowing
whether there is suffering in them
or ever was
and what it is in the tongue they speak
that cannot be remembered by listening
for the whole time that they are on the tree
and then as they fly off with the air
that always through their lives was there

—*W. S. Merwin*

Salgado turned to photography in the early seventies, after trips to Africa. Having startled the world with scenes of vast squalor and ant-farm anonymity in his 1993 book "Workers," he spent six years travelling to forty countries for "Migrations," a book on migrants and refugees. He writes in an introduction, "What I learned about human nature and the world we live in made me deeply apprehensive about the future." Like Nachtwey, he holds us accountable. Our global convulsion, he says, is "entirely of our own making. When I returned to places I had previously known . . . it was painful to discover that things were generally worse."

On the other hand, he lacks Nachtwey's American knack for basing his moral judgments on utopias past or future. No Puritan perfectionism here. Where Nachtwey relies on modernism, Salgado relies on echoes of tradition. Under dark clouds, fishermen haul their boat from the surf. A conical hat and a looped rope balance an ominous island. Salgado doesn't seem to know or care that countless nineteenth-century artists turned this scene into a cliché. In any case, he makes it beautiful, while telling us in a separate booklet of captions that the fishermen are Vietnamese. From beaches like this, hundreds of thousands of their countrymen fled Communist liberation.

Through much of his travels, Salgado was followed by crowds of children begging him to take their picture. He says he made deals with them: he'd take their picture if they'd leave him alone. At home in Paris with his wife, he saw how good the pictures were. I'm skeptical of this story: the pictures are too well composed, lighted, and shot to be tricks he could have played with an empty camera. "The Children" may be the most powerful of the three books. Unlike little American veterans of a thousand snapshots, these children don't pose, usually. They relax into their private selves, as if with Salgado they're safe for a moment. There is penetrating beauty here, but little cuteness.

A Zapatista Indian girl stares at the camera with glazed eyes. An Afghan boy carries a smaller child. A blond Bosnian boy in a winter coat watches warily. An Angolan boy smiles. They are angry, curious, fearful, happy, imperious, and tender. They resist our judgment. These pictures can't be interpreted as easily as the others by Salgado and the ones by Nachtwey—a sign that they may be better.

The pictures in "Migrations" and "Inferno" are part of the genre that erupted when the first Allied troops broke into the Nazi concentration camps. But back then we thought that photographs of the Holocaust—the same bulldozers, barbed wire, and terrible stares we see here—showed us a freakish exception to the enlightened rule that mankind is inherently good and progress is inevitable. These photographs seem to ask if the Holocaust was in fact the rule, and if the discarded notion of mankind's inherent depravity goes further than liberal optimism in explaining the man-made madness of the last hundred years, and of however many centuries there are to come. As always, there's hope, or simply dignity, in the children. ♦

# BRIEFLY NOTED

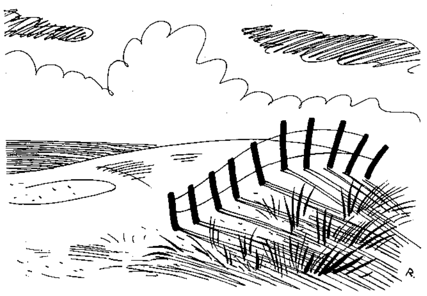
Tuff, *by Paul Beatty (Knopf; $23).* Winston Foshay—street name Tuffy—is a twenty-two-year-old, three-hundred-pound Spanish Harlem native, small-time criminal, and ghetto philosopher whose rage is offset by a cockeyed optimism. With the help of his Japanese guardian, an old activist who once worked for Malcolm X, he runs for City Council, and the loose structure of the campaign season provides Beatty with an opportunity to riff hilariously on old-school black revolutionary politics, gender wars, hip-hop culture, and sumo wrestling. Beneath the scabrous humor lies Tuffy's essential humaneness—he cares deeply for his family, his crew, and his community—and Beatty's critique can't disguise an affection (and lingering hopes) for the tenets of old-fashioned liberalism.

In the Shadow of the Bomb, *by S. S. Schweber (Princeton; $24.95).* The physicists J. Robert Oppenheimer and Hans Bethe both made critical contributions to the atomic bomb during the Second World War—Oppenheimer as head of the Los Alamos Laboratory and Bethe as chief of its theoretical division. After the war, however, they responded differently to key moral tests posed by the nuclear arms race and the search for subversives: Oppenheimer became a high-level academic administrator and an insider in atomic policymaking, whereas Bethe returned to research and teaching, and served as an outside adviser on national defense. Schweber argues that Bethe's scientific work provided him with an ethical anchor of a sort that Oppenheimer lost, but one need not agree with this assessment to find the book an absorbing investigation of how the two physicists, each formidable in his own way, attempted to shoulder responsibility for their creation.

What I Think I Did, *by Larry Woiwode (Basic; $25).* When writers write about how they came to writing, a certain charmless circularity often results, but in this memoir the details of the novelist Larry Woiwode's life take on the mysteriousness and inevitability of good fiction. Whether he is describing his Great Plains childhood, overshadowed by the death of his mother, his heady years as a young writer in New York City, or his present life on a farm in North Dakota—where, in a recent snowstorm, it got so cold that his horses' tails snapped off—he writes with the precision and spiritual urgency of someone for whom "words are a way to find your route back."

The Binding Chair, *by Kathryn Harrison (Random House; $24.95).* May Cohen, born Chao-tsing in China in the eighteen-seventies, is the almost entirely repellent protagonist of this busy novel. Her story—which includes childhood foot-binding (lingeringly described), a horrific first marriage, and a stint as a prostitute in Shanghai before her eventual triumph as a dragon-lady in-law to a rich Anglo-Australian family—is, by virtue of Harrison's writerly flair, better than your average rags-to-riches tale. But May's motives are so transparent, and her inner life so opaque, that the whole is like an old-fashioned stereopticon: the effect of depth and perspective quickly fades.

Darwin's Worms, *by Adam Phillips (Basic; $20)* This slim volume by the provocative British psychotherapist ingeniously puts together ideas common to Darwin and Freud: both believed in a world of ceaseless flux, in which all living things must adapt or die. Phillips looks at Darwin's fondness for the lowly earthworm (whose labors incidentally preserve the past and prepare for the future) and at Freud's scorn for the presumption of biographers. The author sees in the writings of both men a celebration of transience. "If we love our routines more than our futures," he warns, "then we are fatally addicted to the past."



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THE CURRENT CINEMA

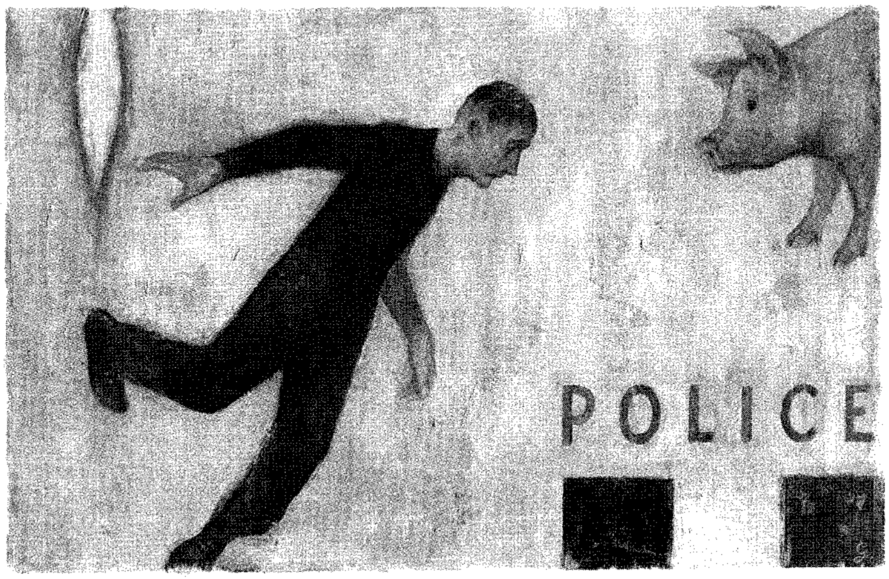
# ALIENS

*Welcome arrivals from France and Poland.*

BY DAVID DENBY

Years ago, the phrase "foreign film" seemed, in its innocent chauvinism, an awkward blanket to throw over every movie made outside the United States. Foreign to whom? Foreign to the children of God's little acre, maybe. Unfortunately, the term now makes more sense: in recent years, the rest of the world has virtually disappeared from American screens, and the films of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East have become very foreign to us indeed. By degrees, the habit of going to films from abroad has shrunk so much that it has come to seem an odd, specialized taste, like chocolates dipped in brandy—or, for some people, in arsenic. But who wants to eat at Burger King all the time? Foreigniness ravishes the American palate, especially now, in the frantic summer-spectacle season, when some of us long for a new tempo, a new way of seeing—a few deeply felt images instead of thousands of flashing, meaningless ones. Bruno Dumont's "Humanité," which begins a two-week run at Film Forum on June 14th (other cities will see it later this summer), is something extraordinary. I don't know quite what to call it—a failed masterpiece, perhaps. All I can tell you is that I arrived at the movie sleepy and out of sorts, only to sit bolt upright and amazed through its hundred-and-forty-eight-minute length. Dumont works in CinemaScope in the north of France, and his enormous, sharply focussed images breathe air and light and a richly suggestive stillness, a palpable sense of something powerful beneath the skin. That the meaning doesn't become clear in the way we want—that Dumont is, in the end, ambiguous and withholding—cannot lessen the hunger that the movie rouses in us, a mixture of intense curiosity and awe.

Here is one of the most eloquent opening shots in recent movies: in the bottom two-thirds of the frame, the thick, dark, rain-saturated grass and heather of French farmland; above, at a distance, the horizon, and a man running in silhouette against a whitened sky. In a sudden closeup, the man falls face down into a plowed field. The earth is loamy and rich, the man an agonized cipher. Nearby lies the corpse of an eleven-year-old girl, naked and battered; she is seen from her feet, her reddened and violated genitals exposed. Is the man lying in the mud her murderer? To our surprise, he climbs into a police car. He is a cop, though he lacks the usual attributes of a cop. Having lost his wife and child a few years earlier, he lives in town—in Bailleul, near the coast—with his mother. Depressed and out of it, he talks and walks slowly, his shoulders slumping. His name is Pharaon De Winter, and he's the rather dim great-grandson of a renowned local painter of the same name, who really did exist, although the rest of the film is fiction. Pharaon is played by a non-professional named Emmanuel Schotté, who, to put it mildly, lacks the moment-to-moment animation of a trained actor. But Schotté's slow tempo, his paleness, and his mediocre physique are redeemed by his eyes, which, set in a homely face, overflow with emotion. Schotté stares and stares; he's almost a voyeur of life (a moviegoer?), and his gaze has an empathic richness—he looks at things and then feels his way into situations.



*Emmanuel Schotté in "Humanité," a great film that comes close to the outrageous.*

GERARD DUBOIS

Pharaon silently longs for a woman who lives down the block—Domino (Séverine Caneele), a big-boned factory worker who has rough, nearly ugly peasant features. By turns lewd and kindly, this commonplace sex goddess makes love passionately to her loutish boyfriend, Joseph (Philippe Tullier), though she loves Pharaon, who hangs on to the couple in passive misery. The lovemaking is not lyricized or even sensualized; it's filmed in full shot, straight on, bluntly—as an astounding physical fact and an eternal mystery. Domino and Joseph excite each other, but Domino knows that there are depths in Pharaon that Joseph doesn't have. When she abruptly offers herself to Pharaon, and he refuses her, frightened by her directness, she is photographed as the little girl was, from her feet, with her genitals exposed. Bourgeois refinement still has so strong a hold on the French temperament that anti-bourgeois art can be as disturbing as a pistol going off in the night. "Humanité" won the Grand Jury Prize and two acting awards (for Schotté and Caneele) at last year's Cannes Film Festival, and it also earned a fair amount of derision. Like many great films, it comes close to the outrageous. The linked shots of female genitalia suggest the portals of both life and death, yet no interpretation can account for the unpornographic power of these scenes or for the sheer physical weight of bodies throughout the movie.

The title, "Humanité," refers not to all of humankind but to the humanness of individuals, which for Dumont means the mix of good and bad, violent and sacred. I wasn't crazy about Dumont's dour earlier work "La Vie de Jésus," but I guess I got the point of it: the scrawny, unpleasant young man at the center of the movie, a biker tearing around the countryside, was a bad guy marked, paradoxically, by the divine. Dumont offers a religious view, expressed without overt sentiment: if Jesus is to mean anything at all, he must exist in every one of us. In "Humanité," Pharaon, the possible murderer, sniffs at the flesh of people accused of crime. There's something doggy and strange about him. He embraces a confessed drug dealer—the act is a disturbing confluence of sexual interest and sympathy. In form, the movie is a detective story, but we watch with increasing apprehensiveness as it dawns on us that Pharaon may be a kind of slow-motion Oedipus, a sleuth who uncovers the traces of a crime that he has committed himself. As the Eurostar express passes at high speed, he howls, as if overwhelmed with anguish. A eunuch with grown women, he appears to be lamenting the perversity that turns sex into murder.

Dumont works in a style I can only call metaphysical naturalism, in which the brute facts of life are used to suggest the hidden relations among things—the relation, say, between sex and violence. Certainly the world revealed its meanings to Pharaon's great-grandfather, the painter whose religious scenes and portraits are gathered at a nearby museum. Dumont stares as hard as the old painter did, and he and his cinematographer, Yves Cape, clear all the cruddy and glib images out of our heads. The color is very dry and precise, and we register small changes in the light. But the world does not easily yield its secrets. If anything, the movie expresses the pathos of impenetrability. Is Pharaon guilty of a sordid crime? The last few shots suggest that either of two men may be responsible; Dumont, taunting us, insists on a complicity of spirit between them—an ending that has caused arguments among all the people I know who have seen the movie. One must debate this movie in order to deal with it at all. But the intense pleasure of its foreignness remains.

In 1988 and 1989, the late Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski made a series of television films, "The Decalogue," in which each movie, roughly an hour in length, was devoted to one of the Ten Commandments. The films, set largely around an apartment complex in Warsaw, are not literal illustrations of the commandments but more like fables inspired by them—very modern fables, as it turns out, featuring relations between men and women of an intensity and depth not seen since Ingmar Bergman stopped making movies, earlier in the eighties. In all, the episodes of "The Decalogue" are more accessible and attractive than such later Kieslowski works as "The Double Life of Véronique." The short form seems to have forced the director to define his themes and to corral his sometimes too effulgent visual symbolism. In silence, or in terse, fragmentary, and mordantly witty conversation, the characters size one another up—and then a powerful emotion bursts into life. The quality of the writing and the acting is so high that an American viewer may ruefully conclude that even our most serious efforts in the movies are aimed at adults who have barely attained the moral age of twelve. The foreign-film distributor Daniel Talbot will be showing these films two at a time at Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, in New York, in a series that starts on June 9th and runs for five weeks. I'm told that if the series does well it will go on the road. If there's still an audience out there for such marvellous work, now's the time for it to show up. ♦

The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for six combined issues: Feb. 21 & Feb. 28, Apr. 24 & May 1, June 19 & 26, Aug. 21 & 28, Oct. 16 & 23, Dec. 25 & Jan. 1) by The Condé Nast Publications Inc., 4 Times Square, N.Y., N.Y. 10036. Vol. LXXVI, No. 15, June 12, 2000. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $49.95. In Canada, one year, $90.00 (includes GST and HST where applicable). In Germany, one year, DM290. Mail orders to: IP Internationale Presse, Distribution & Marketing GmbH, Waldstr. 70, D-63128 Dietzenbach, Germany. Other foreign subscriptions, one year, $112.00, payable in advance.

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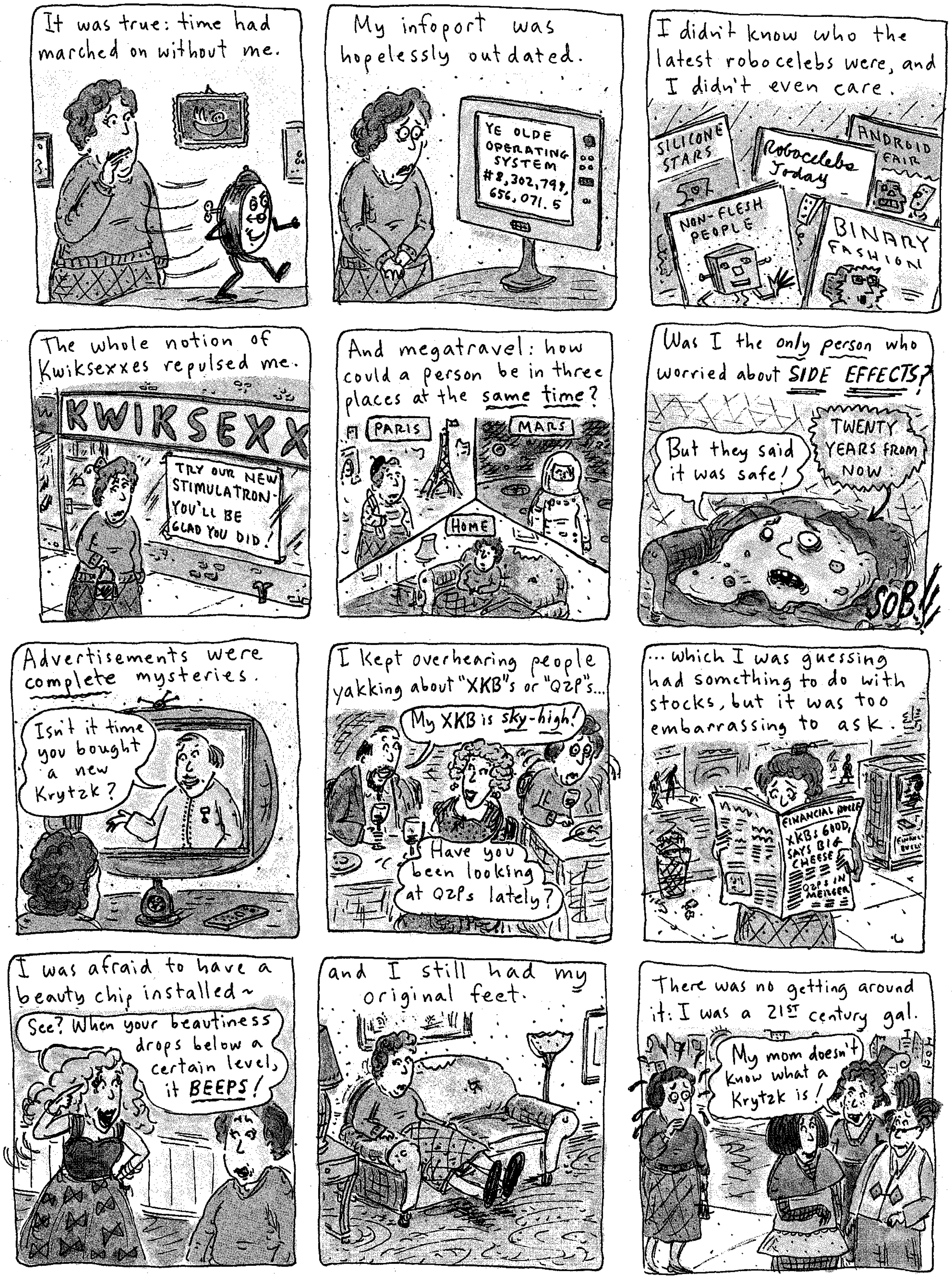
# COMING SOONER THAN YOU THINK


It was true: time had marched on without me.
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Robocelebs Today
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And megatravel: how could a person be in three places at the same time?
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Was I the only person who worried about SIDE EFFECTS?
But they said it was safe!
TWENTY YEARS FROM NOW
SOB!
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Isn't it time you bought a new Krytzk?
I kept overhearing people yakking about "XKB"s or "QZP"s...
My XKB is sky-high!
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...which I was guessing had something to do with stocks, but it was too embarrassing to ask.
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XKBs GOOD, SAYS BIG CHEESE
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I was afraid to have a beauty chip installed ~
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and I still had my original feet.
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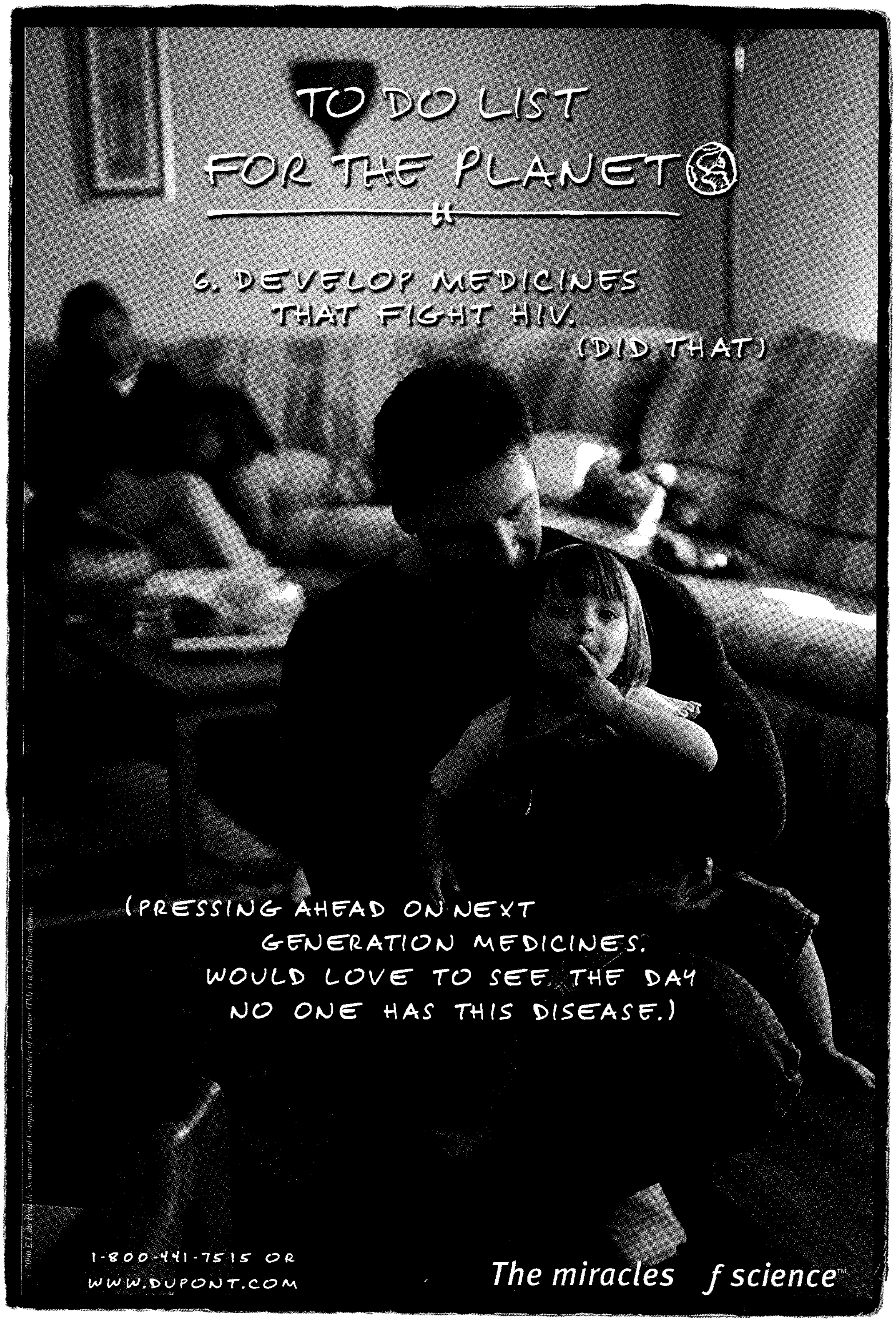
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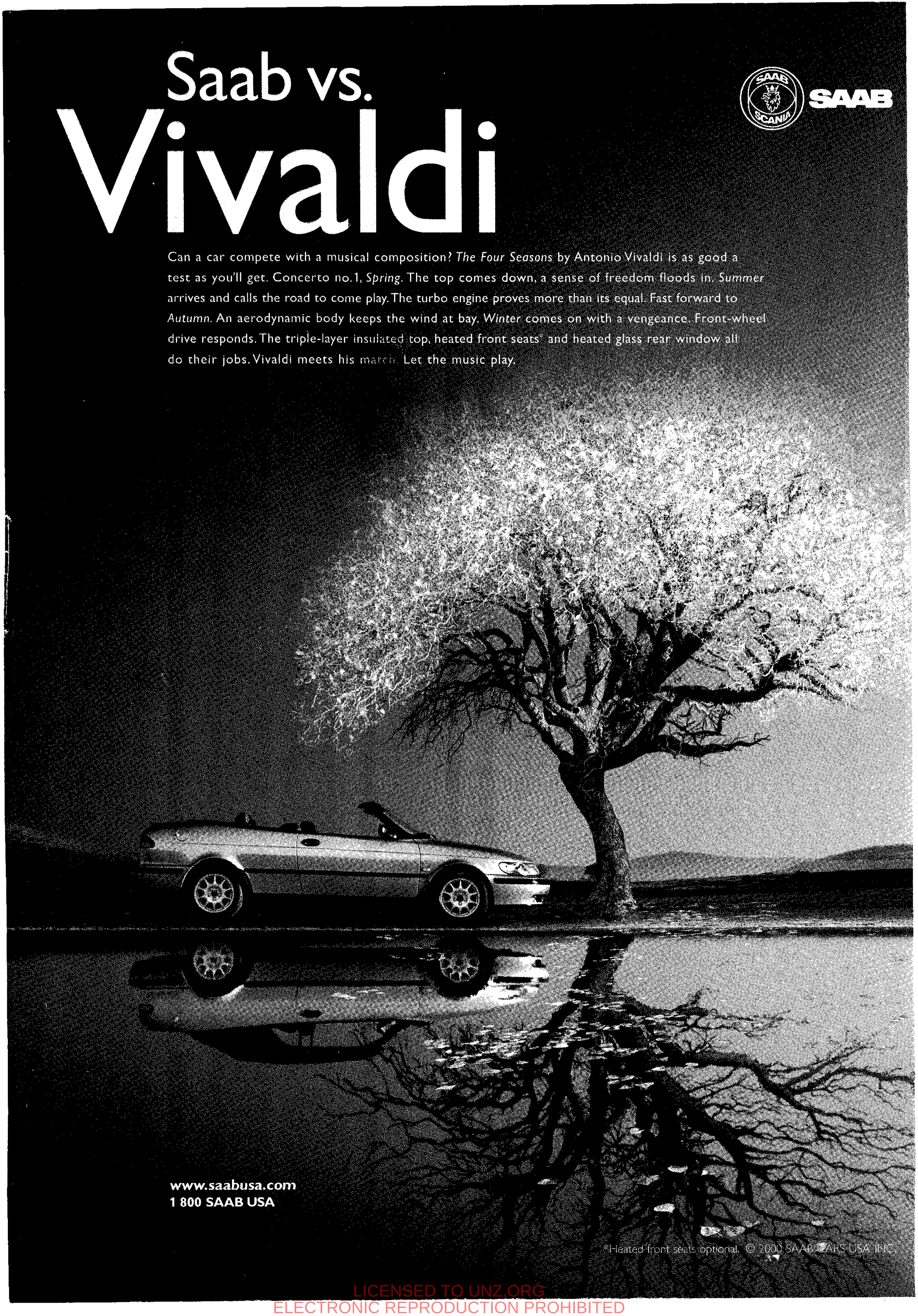

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